

Grief and Music: The Expansion Towards Personalization in the Requiem Mass

Genevieve Catherine Welch

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Introduction: The Development of a Funeral Rite

Death is an experience common to all people regardless of nationality, faith, creed, or origin. It is a simple but immense touchstone of our lives that leads to a desire to understand, process, and commemorate the lost. Funeral rites were born of this need. Though rituals may vary throughout time and place, their purpose is universally similar: to honor those who have passed and to structure the experiences of grief and existentialism. One such tradition is the Catholic Requiem Mass - a funeral rite set to music.

Requiems have remained a pervasive genre of musical compositions for centuries and there is no indication that their popularity will lessen. The reason they are so frequently created is likely due to their applicability to the experience of any person - religious or not. The Requiem handles one of the most intimidating and difficult topics in our world, and with the vast array of approaches to the form that exists, anyone could probably find a setting that speaks to their experiences or outlook. Whether one is a believer or not inevitably influences one's experience of a Requiem and how one interprets it, but appreciators of the works are certainly not all believers. Requiems have filled concert halls with spiritually-diverse attendees in addition to Catholic churches. There is an ancient history that follows the Requiem and connects us to the common experience of loss present in every generation before and after us. Music critic Alec Roberston, who wrote an extensive book on the Requiem, muses about "the experience of those who habitually fill our concert halls to hear a performance, let us say, of Verdi's *Requiem*" and postulates that "whatever their beliefs may be, their response is not, I believe, merely emotional, it is also spiritual."¹

The name "Requiem" can reference the Mass itself or musical settings thereof and is a reference to the first word of the Latin Introit text. There are other titles one may encounter as

¹ Alec Robertson, *Requiem: Music of Mourning and Consolation* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), x.

well, such as *Missa pro defunctis*. Its universality can be seen in its many translations across the world. This honoring of the dead and presentation of the Requiem Mass traditionally takes place on All Souls Day - November 2nd. Many other traditions and regions have similar designated days to honor the dead such as the *Qingming* festival (Tomb-Sweeping Day) in China or the *O'bon* festival in Japan.² While All Souls Day was established by St. Odo of Cluny in 998, masses for the dead were not common until the concept of Purgatory became more solidified in the faith in the 13th century. It is a central idea in both the text and purpose of the Requiem. This mass is technically not a common or a votive mass, but rather is to be sung on the day of death or burial, or three, seven, or thirteen days after burial. Some key features that differentiate it from other masses are the lack of a Gloria or Credo, the addition of the Sequence *Dies irae*, and no rite of communion. The Requiem “is one of the oldest continuously existing musical genres.”³ The roots of the form date back to the pre-apostolic era when the Jews would pray for eternal rest for their souls after death.⁴ The beginnings of the evolution of the Requiem Mass can be seen in the catacombs of Rome - a 96-mile underground maze of a cemetery formed by the early Christians, where there are prayers written both to and for the departed. This community “lived unafraid near neath, for to die for Christ’s sake was a privilege.”⁵ Originally, the Requiem served the liturgical purpose of praying for the souls of the deceased in the belief that such prayers could help that soul spend less time in purgatory and influence the decision on Judgment Day.

The Requiem is a Mass proper, meaning that it contains additional movements to those of a typical Mass (“Mass ordinary”). The Mass ordinary consists of the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo,

² Vladimir J. Konecni, “Requiem: Psychological, Philosophical, and Aesthetic Notes on the Music of the Mass for the Dead—Dedicated to the Victims of COVID-19 Worldwide,” *Art and Design Review* 8, no. 2 (April 17, 2020): 114–26, <https://doi.org/10.4236/adr.2020.82008>.

³ Wolfgang Marx, “‘Requiem Sempiternam’? Death and the Musical Requiem in the Twentieth Century,” *Mortality* 17, no. 2 (May 2012): 119, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13576275.2012.675198>.

⁴ Ron Jeffers, *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire* (Corvallis, Or.: Earthsongs, 1989), 62.

⁵ Robertson, *Requiem: Music of Mourning and Consolation*, 4.

Sanctus, and Agnus Dei in that order. The Requiem mass can include an Introit, Sequence, Offertory, Communion, Responsory, and Antiphon. These additions are not all required and a work can also still be a Requiem if it has additional texts not part of the traditional Mass text at all. This is especially common later in the history of the form. Examples of variation in movements could be that Giuseppe Verdi's (1813-1901) *Messa da Requiem* (1874) ends with the *Libera me* Responsory whereas Charles Gounod (1818–1893) and Gabriel Faure (1845–1924) include the *Pie Jesu* (from the Sequence), and in Faure's case, an *In Paradisum* (Antiphon) movement as well. Meanwhile, Vyacheslav Artyomov's (b. 1940) *Requiem* (1988) is the most complete setting of the text with fifteen sections.⁶ The *Libera me* and the *In paradisum* (Responsory and Antiphon) come from the *Exequiarum Ordo* (Burial Rite) and are sung before the absolution of the body and while it is carried to the grave. The *Dies irae* was the last addition to the Requiem Mass. It was first seen in an Italian Dominican Missal from the fourteenth century and French Missals from the fifteenth century, and at the command of the Council of Trent (1545–1563), was subsequently made part of the Roman Missal of Pope Pius V in 1570. Initially, “the threat of eternal damnation vividly announced its presence” in the Requiem until the Second Vatican Council when the *Dies irae* was made less threatening or was sometimes no longer even present.⁷ Regardless, the *Dies irae* has remained a critical component of the Requiem, often acting as a central element of compositions and representing the essence of the genre.

Table 1: The traditional movements of the Requiem Mass paired with a sample of their texts in Latin and English⁸

⁶ Konecni, “Requiem.”

⁷ Robert Chase, *Dies Irae: A Guide to Requiem Music* (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2003), xiii.

⁸ Jeffers, *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire*, 63.

Movement title	Beginning of text - Latin, English
Introit	<i>Requiem aeternam</i> (“Rest eternal grant unto them”)
Kyrie	<i>Kyrie eleison</i> (“Lord, have mercy”)
Gradual	<i>Requiem aeternam</i> (“Rest eternal grant unto them”)
Tract	<i>Absolve, Domine</i> (“Absolve, O Lord, the souls of the faithful departed”)
Sequence	<i>Dies irae</i> (“Day of wrath”)
Offertory	<i>Domine Jusu Christe</i> (“Lord Jesus Christ”)
Sanctus	<i>Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus</i> (“Holy, Holy, Holy”)
Benedictus	<i>Benedictus qui venit</i> (“Blessed is he who comes”)
Agnus Dei	<i>Agnus Dei</i> (“Lamb of God”)
Communion	<i>Lux aeterna</i> (“May light eternal shine on them”)
Responsory	<i>Libera me, Domine</i> (“Deliver me, O Lord”)
Antiphon	<i>In paradisum</i> (“May the Angels lead you into paradise”)

Over centuries, the form migrated to the concert hall and encompassed non-liturgical intentions and messages. A common example of this is Benjamin Britten’s (1913–1976) *War Requiem* (1962), which spoke to pacifist sentiments. As the Requiem moved into the concert hall, the strictness of the textual and musical options available also broadened. Composers sometimes do not observe the liturgical order of the texts, will repeat or condense sections into single movements or do not include other parts at all. These choices give us insight into a composer’s perspective theologically or philosophically as well as musically.

While the tone of the Requiem is generally quite solemn and thoughtful, there are moments of exuberance, spiritual passion, and hope contained within. The musical setting of this Mass was originally intended strictly for liturgical purposes. From 800 – 1400 as measured music and polyphony developed, the Requiem - and other Mass propers - continued to be sung

with plainsong melodies and it wasn't until a century later that the Requiem mass was granted polyphony - later than the Mass ordinary. The polyphony was believed to be both too colorful and too lengthy for this form. These plainsong chants have remained in the Requiem though, through both their reference through incipits to begin movements or as the basis for composition as a primary melody or cantus firmus. There is disagreement surrounding which polyphonic Requiem is the first. The contenders are those by Guillaume Dufay (1397–1474) and Johannes Ockeghem (c. 1410–1425 – 1497) with the uncertainty stemming from a lack of score for the former and uncertainty in dating the latter. Generally though, most signs seem to point to the former. Another classic polyphonic Requiem example from this era would be that of Antoine Brumel (1460–1512).

Example 1: The *Dies irae* chant written in neumes⁹



The seventeenth century was a time of musical transition and since Requiem compositions are inherently influenced by the musical trends of their times, they experienced this transition as well. The a cappella *stile antico*, the popularity of madrigalism, *basso continuo* and its figured bass, and polychoral music all influenced the music of the era. While the Requiem

⁹ Jeffers, *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire*, 66.

remained a more conservative form, these new ideas were still included and at the same time, there was a slight retreat from the heavy use of plainsong. This was also the era in which instruments were added, initially often doubling the voices. Chromaticism arrived in the Requiem during this century as well, as can be seen in the Victoria explored extensively in the first chapter. In Alec Robertson's research, he concludes that counterpoint is subservient to harmonic writing in these Requiems as opposed to those that came before them, and that "subjective expression, in ever-increasing measure, now invaded sacred music."¹⁰

These Requiem compositions were often commissioned by courts as a reminder of their wealth and elegance, but with the onset of the Age of Enlightenment, and especially following the Napoleonic Wars, courts less frequently commissioned such grand works. The church had also lost power and with the retreat of these two standard venues for the Requiem, it began to move to the concert hall, gaining secular function along with other choral music. It there became accessible to the middle class. Mozart's *Requiem in D Minor* (1791) may have been the first to receive a concert hall performance unrelated to any church.¹¹ While liturgical Requiems were still composed, they were typically shorter with smaller forces and have often not as effectively withstood the test of time. In this era, approximately the beginning of the eighteenth century, was the dawn of the symphonic Requiem as the styles of the time exerted its influence. The early eighteenth century brought Requiems from the Neapolitan school with its *bel-canto* style and ornamentation which was to be overtaken by the Viennese school later in the century - this is the category in which Mozart's Requiem falls. The Viennese school also initiated the merging of the Introit and Kyrie and the Agnus Dei and Communion, which continued into the Romantic era. An emphasis on structure and elegance are all evident in Requiems of this time, with more

¹⁰ Robertson, *Requiem: Music of Mourning and Consolation*, 57.

¹¹ Marx, "'Requiem Sempiternam?'" 120.

homophonic and chordal writing replacing the earlier polyphony. Tessitura also grew higher in many cases.

With the onset of the nineteenth century, the concert Requiem had become fully established, often showing similar qualities to oratorio and opera. This expanded the standard length of the form and opened the door for Romantic influence. This included immense drama in both size of forces and tendencies of writing, including increased variety and shifts in dynamic and tempo. Verdi's *Messa da Requiem* (1874) is of course a fantastic example of this, and to a slightly lesser extent, so is that of Berlioz (1837). Fauré's Requiem (1890) is also arguably an example of these influences merely on the opposite side of the spectrum, with a programmatic emphasis on the gentle elements of the text rather than the forceful. This era also brought more of an emphasis on virtuosity including increased chromaticism and vocal divisi.

The vast musical diversity of the twentieth century is evident in Requiems with compositions in a multitude of styles in every direction. Besides the increased diversity, the primary development of this time was the solidifying of the secular Requiem. This iteration moved the farthest away from the liturgy yet, and while most still utilize at least sections of the traditional text, their messages are largely devoid of religious intent. This century also marks the advent of the war Requiem genre spurred, unsurprisingly, by the many wars of the era. These works focus on memorializing mass death and communicating ideals of pacifism to varying extents. The most salient example, Benjamin Britten's, will be explored at length in the third chapter. Lastly, this century witnessed the composition of instrumental Requiems. Britten took part in this new strain as well with his *Sinfonia da Requiem* (1940) along with numerous other composers.

In the setting of the concert hall, one is arguably able to engage on a more intellectual level with a work, making way for the possibility of new ideas when not in an emotional funeral context. In this way, the secularizing and intellectualizing of the Requiem was an allowance of the concert hall. The content has shifted from the exclusive setting of a specific Mass text to the idea that a Requiem can be anything so named. The one element that unifies all Requiems whether they are from the very beginnings of the form or the contemporary era is that a Requiem is always for something - be it a person, event, soul, cause, or idea. In this way, the ancient form has universal applicability and power in that anyone can sing a Requiem for anything that may compel them. It is therefore an extremely personal form of music, as it can mean something different but equally powerful to each composer or performer as they select for whom or what they sing a Requiem. When composers set this text, they strive “not only to console sorrow and bereavement, but also to nurture and inspire happiness, optimism, and hope for resurrection.”¹²

In 1941 American musicologist Charles Warren Fox assembled a list of over 1000 Requiem settings. That list, though, was incomplete, as acknowledged by Fox himself. The actual number likely sits between 2000 and 2500. Considering this, there is surprisingly little research and writing on the Requiem mass as compared to other popular musical forms. Many Requiems have also never entered the limelight with only a favored few receiving frequent performance - namely those of Mozart, Britten, Fauré, Duruflé, Verdi, Brahms, and sometimes Cherubini or Berlioz.

The task of writing a Requiem is not easy and “the composers who [have] vehemently struggled to set the familiar, oft-used words [make] sincere attempts to cast a light upon the twinned emotions of sorrow and hope.”¹³ The Requiems we know and love today, especially

¹² Chase, *Dies Irae*, xv.

¹³ Chase, *Dies Irae*, xv.

from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were written by composers well into their maturity. As psychologist and aesthete Vladimir J. Konečni eloquently explains, these composers have “experienced grief, joy, pain, and both the dashed and the rekindled hope. The Requiem mass, more than any other musical form, explicitly deals with spirituality and metaphysics; thus a composer who has experienced the complexities and vagaries of life may have been more likely to have deeper sources of understanding and psychological inspiration from which to draw.”¹⁴

Composers who have set the Requiem text vary widely in their own religious convictions, from staunch believers to agnostics and atheists. Each of these perspectives results in a radically different approach to the Requiem mass text and alters greatly its significance to that individual. In a composer’s setting of the Requiem mass, their own outlook on the world - including religion, philosophies, politics, and priorities - is often evident in their musical and textual choices. This is because the topic matter of the Requiem is inherently immensely personal as it grapples with unanswerable questions, so the composer must draw from their own experiences to convincingly set it. That is what gives this form its beauty and makes it inseparable from its composers. The form explores “a profound philosophical, psychological, and emotional enigma.”¹⁵

The four Requiems primarily explored in this thesis are Thomás Luis de Victoria’s *Officium defunctorum*, Johannes Brahms’ *Ein deutsches Requiem*, Benjamin Britten’s *War Requiem*, and Zbigniew Preisner’s *Requiem for my Friend*. The Victoria was selected as a representation of the initial form and intent of the Requiem Mass. Written by a pious Catholic priest for liturgical purposes, it utilizes the traditional texts set in a polyphonic style. Those of Brahms and Britten, on the other hand, are key examples of Requiems that have pushed the form

¹⁴ Konečni, “Requiem.”

¹⁵ Konečni, “Requiem.”

in new directions. The Brahms is a Requiem in title but utilizes alternative biblical texts and was intended not to pray for the souls of the dead but instead to console the living. The Britten is a work with a pacifist mission that combines poetry with the traditional Mass text in order to convey a powerful and dramatically-set message. Both of these works made the Requiem serve as a vessel for something beyond its original liturgical intent and paved the way for future works. Lastly, the Preisner is an example of the form's evolution into new territories. Preisner is a Polish film composer and while his Requiem was initially conceived for a funeral, it is far removed from the liturgical beginnings of the form. It consists of two sections - one using the traditional Requiem text and the other using biblical and original texts as well as exclusively instrumental movements. The result is decidedly cinematic in nature.

These Requiems will be utilized in an exploration of the progression of the form from being strictly an ancient funeral rite of the Catholic church to a mainstay concert hall in the present day. The secularization and intellectualizing of the Requiem will be investigated as the audience migrated from an intimate funeral gathering to the general public. This was coupled with a shift in dedication from one specific individual to groups, events, or ideas. Throughout this analysis, the critical impact of a composer's context, values, and outlook on these compositions will be revealed, showing how a Requiem composition is inherently inseparable from its composer as a highly personal form. Lastly, the evolution of the Requiem towards becoming a cultural touchstone and a secular concept will be discussed.

Chapter 1: Victoria - A Sacred Beginning

Spanish composer Thomás Luis de Victoria was born in 1548 in Avila, Spain as the seventh of eleven children. Victoria's biography is somewhat sparse, but we know most of the critical details. The composer's musical training began as a choirboy at Avila Cathedral and soon brought him to Rome in 1565 where he refined his understanding of Latin. It is assumed that Victoria knew Palestrina, or was maybe even taught by him, as the elder composer was employed as *maestro di cappella* at the Seminario Romano, which was near where Victoria was studying. Contact between the two composers accounts for stylistic similarities. That said, Victoria's masses were typically shorter than Palestrina's and utilized more divisions by strong cadences.¹⁶ Victoria was also present at Palestrina's funeral.

A pious Catholic, he was ordained as a deacon on August 25, 1575, and as a priest three days later with ceremonies on the Via di Monserrato at the English church. He joined the Congregazione dell'Oratorio, a community of lay priests, and soon received a chaplaincy at S Girolamo della Carità on June 8th, 1578. In 1583, he was elected to be visitor to the sick and Spanish destitute. The composer later returned to Spain to be chaplain to Empress María (1528–1603), the sister of King Philip II. Victoria was *maestro* for her convent that only utilized highly skilled musicians for their Masses. He was subsequently employed as their organist and despite offers from other institutions, he retained this position until his death. In total, he was the Empress' chaplain from 1587–1603, ending with her death. His duties for her were mostly spiritual rather than musical.¹⁷

¹⁶ Stevenson, Robert. "Victoria, Tomás Luis de." Database. Grove Music Online, 2001.
<https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy.wellesley.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000029298>.

¹⁷ Rees, Owen. *The Requiem of Tomas Luis de Victoria (1603)*. Music in Context. Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019, 1.

In his career as a composer, Victoria only set sacred Latin texts and was an emblem of the counter-reformation. His publications often contained previously published pieces and he had a lesser output than Palestrina or Lassus - counterparts of his time. That said, he did publish almost the entirety of his body of work, which was a notable feat at the time, including twenty Masses. In his oeuvre, he was notably drawn to the Marian antiphon among other forms. These Marian compositions were successful during his lifetime and immediately after as is evidenced by the distribution of their manuscripts.¹⁸

His *Officium defunctorum* - his Requiem - is one of the works for which he is now best known, along with numerous motets such as *O vos omnes* and *Vere languores nostros*. A certain “mystical fervour” is a common denominator of Victoria’s compositions as well as “a poignancy rarely encountered in other music of the period.”¹⁹ Musicologist Owen Rees argues that the Requiem is viewed as Victoria’s “crowning achievement.”²⁰ João IV of Portugal was a contemporary critic of Victoria’s with a thorough familiarity with his oeuvre and he describes that Victoria naturally tends toward the joyful over the tragic. In his 1649 *Defensa de la música moderna* he states that “although there is much in his Holy Week volume [1585] that exactly suits the text, nonetheless his disposition being naturally sunny he never stays downcast for long.”²¹ Rees assesses that the Requiem in particular boasts a powerful melding of “variety and coherence” - certainly a compositional strength.²² The influence of Renaissance Humanism was also strong at the time at which Victoria was working. For composers, this movement inspired an intentional consideration of the emotional effect of their music on its listeners, which informed

¹⁸ Stevenson, “Victoria, Tomás Luis De.”

¹⁹ Stevenson, “Victoria, Tomás Luis De.”

²⁰ Rees, *The Requiem of Tomas Luis de Victoria (1603)*, 1.

²¹ Stevenson, “Victoria, Tomás Luis De.”

²² Rees, *The Requiem of Tomas Luis de Victoria (1603)*, 231.

their compositional choices. Victoria would have been steeped in this mindset along with his contemporaries.

In his masses, Victoria tends towards compositional techniques different from his contemporaries such as Palestrina or Guerrero by using tonal shifts evident in his chromatic melodies and sometimes unusual intervals. For instance, Victoria includes 69 accidentals (as ficta) in his Magnificat (1581), while Palestrina writes only 16 in his setting.²³ Overall though, the tonal elements of Victoria's oeuvre lack substantial research.²⁴ He was also quite fond of paired imitation in his writing and sometimes the use of canon.²⁵ The composer was proud, as evidenced in a 1601 letter to the Jaén cathedral authorities, to have recommended before it was common that one choir part be substituted for organ when necessary in his polychoral music and provided organ scores with which to do so.²⁶

Victoria's *Officium defunctorum* was published in 1605 in Madrid. It consists of one Mass, one Responsory, and one Office item and is considered quite original. The Requiem was not released to any particular enthusiasm initially, but the work grew beloved and appreciated with time, especially reaching that status beginning in the mid to late nineteenth century.²⁷ Its tenacity is remarkable considering what an early polyphonic Requiem composition it is (between 1400 and 1615, only approximately 45 were written).²⁸ The publication of the work occurred two years after the death of the Empress María, in whose honor the piece was written. It was possibly first heard, therefore, two years earlier in 1603 at the events of her passing. This was the only piece that Victoria ever dedicated to a woman.

²³ Stevenson, "Victoria, Tomás Luis De."

²⁴ Roig-Francoli, Miguel A. "From Renaissance to Baroque: Tonal Structures in Thomas Luis de Victoria's Masses." *Music Theory Spectrum* 40, no. 1 (2018): 27.

²⁵ Stevenson, "Victoria, Tomás Luis De."

²⁶ Stevenson, "Victoria, Tomás Luis De."

²⁷ Noone, "Owen Rees, The Requiem of Tomás Luis de Victoria. Cambridge and New York," 313.

²⁸ Fox, Charles Warren. "The Polyphonic Requiem before about 1615." *Bulletin of the American Musicological Society*, no. 7 (1943): 6. <https://doi.org/10.2307/829322>.

Victoria had also written a *Missa pro defunctis* in 1583 and the Libera me of his *Officium defunctorum* is precisely lifted from this previous composition. In the publishing of the new work, the *Tremens factus sum ego* verse with its three-voice texture is somewhat awkwardly inserted into the six-voice composition leaving mismatched clefs. This strange fact seems out of character with Victoria's reputation for perfectionism and therefore generates some suspicion about the publication of the work.²⁹ It is clear that the publication was completed in haste and with an effort to lower costs, sometimes at the expense of legibility.³⁰ The score included missteps such as misnumbered folios, tight spacing, and incorrect ligatures.³¹

Victoria's *Officium defunctorum* serves in this analysis as a relatively early polyphonic Requiem that exemplifies the liturgical purpose of the form and is therefore something of a departure point for discussion of further development. Written by someone who certainly held a strong Catholic faith - a priest no less - it remains true to the most traditional intention of the Requiem without the additional ideas and inventions of those explored in later chapters of this analysis. It was written not long into the departure from chant use in the Requiem, with those melodies becoming incipits. In his motet-style composition, Victoria reaches forward to the use of chromaticism and the occasional unexpected harmonic choice, devices that would only grow more heavily utilized as the century continued.

The Requiem opens with a lesson from the Book of Job - "*Taedet animam meam*" - questioning why there is evil in the world and evoking judgment in the eyes of God. It begins in four voices on an A minor chord, moving to the dominant on the second syllable of text. All remains largely homophonic throughout the entire movement with only sparse moments of extraneous gestures. On the text "*et consilium impiorum aduives?*" ("and to support the schemes

²⁹ Noone, "Owen Rees, The Requiem of Tomás Luis de Victoria. Cambridge and New York," 318.

³⁰ Rees, *The Requiem of Tomas Luis de Victoria (1603)*, 77.

³¹ Noone, "Owen Rees, The Requiem of Tomás Luis de Victoria. Cambridge and New York," 319.

of the wicked?") Victoria presents the word "wicked" with a clear instance of word painting with the most direct and consistent dissonances heard thus far. When the text "*Numquid sicut dies hominis dies tui*" ("Is Thy life like the life of men") arrives, Victoria presents us with a peculiar cadence in D major coming from C major. This slightly strange harmonic movement perhaps is the composer-priest reflecting the mysteries or dualities of God as an answer to this questioning of why there is evil. There is a similar device used at the related "*et anni tui sicut humana sunt tempora*" ("and do Thy years pass like the days of men") where Victoria cadences in A major coming from C major by way of a brief G minor chord. On the final word of the lesson though, "*erue*" ("deliver"), Victoria resolves a dissonance into a requisite picardy third - A major in answer to his opening chord - and slows both the rhythm and the text declamation. It is not surprising that Victoria provides this resolution to this line of questioning in reflection of his own firm beliefs.

After its incipit, the first movement using Requiem text commences with a six-part texture in F major. The composer lists his voices as cantus I, cantus II, altus, tenor I, tenor II, and bassus. Their opening phrases meditating on "*Dona eis Domine*" uses a rich and beautiful polyphony taking advantage of the forces present. An unexpected D major chord following a C major phrase in the midst of the F major tonal center is particularly notable harmonically. With the arrival of the "*et lux perpetua luceat eis*" text, the declamation becomes more rapid, gaining energy - perhaps the light itself and Victoria's faith in it (see example 2). Following a cadence in F major to conclude that section, we return to an incipit to introduce the next text: "*te decet hymnus Deus in Sion*." A few phrases into this next movement, Victoria utilizes a stunning moment of A major coupled with a thinning texture to begin a new section of counterpoint. Cross relations (F#/natural and C#/natural) add harmonic intrigue to this moment that announces

“*ad te omnis caro veniet*” (“unto Thee shall all flesh come”) Victoria then closes the movement with the same music and text as the opening, completely repeating the first section including the incipit.

Example 2: Introitus: Requiem aeternam, the first introduction of “*lux perpetua*”³²

The musical score is for six voices: C. I, C. II, A., T. I, T. II, and B. The lyrics are: lux per-pe - tu - a, et lux per-pe - tu - a lu - ce - at e - is. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. The first section (measures 1-8) is marked with a '17' above the first staff. The second section (measures 9-16) is marked with a '18' above the first staff. The third section (measures 17-24) is marked with a '19' above the first staff. The fourth section (measures 25-32) is marked with a '20' above the first staff. The fifth section (measures 33-40) is marked with a '21' above the first staff. The sixth section (measures 41-48) is marked with a '22' above the first staff. The seventh section (measures 49-56) is marked with a '23' above the first staff. The eighth section (measures 57-64) is marked with a '24' above the first staff. The ninth section (measures 65-72) is marked with a '25' above the first staff. The tenth section (measures 73-80) is marked with a '26' above the first staff. The eleventh section (measures 81-88) is marked with a '27' above the first staff. The twelfth section (measures 89-96) is marked with a '28' above the first staff. The thirteenth section (measures 97-104) is marked with a '29' above the first staff. The fourteenth section (measures 105-112) is marked with a '30' above the first staff. The fifteenth section (measures 113-120) is marked with a '31' above the first staff. The sixteenth section (measures 121-128) is marked with a '32' above the first staff. The seventeenth section (measures 129-136) is marked with a '33' above the first staff. The eighteenth section (measures 137-144) is marked with a '34' above the first staff. The nineteenth section (measures 145-152) is marked with a '35' above the first staff. The twentieth section (measures 153-160) is marked with a '36' above the first staff. The twenty-first section (measures 161-168) is marked with a '37' above the first staff. The twenty-second section (measures 169-176) is marked with a '38' above the first staff. The twenty-third section (measures 177-184) is marked with a '39' above the first staff. The twenty-fourth section (measures 185-192) is marked with a '40' above the first staff. The twenty-fifth section (measures 193-200) is marked with a '41' above the first staff. The twenty-sixth section (measures 201-208) is marked with a '42' above the first staff. The twenty-seventh section (measures 209-216) is marked with a '43' above the first staff. The twenty-eighth section (measures 217-224) is marked with a '44' above the first staff. The twenty-ninth section (measures 225-232) is marked with a '45' above the first staff. The thirtieth section (measures 233-240) is marked with a '46' above the first staff. The thirty-first section (measures 241-248) is marked with a '47' above the first staff. The thirty-second section (measures 249-256) is marked with a '48' above the first staff. The thirty-third section (measures 257-264) is marked with a '49' above the first staff. The thirty-fourth section (measures 265-272) is marked with a '50' above the first staff. The thirty-fifth section (measures 273-280) is marked with a '51' above the first staff. The thirty-sixth section (measures 281-288) is marked with a '52' above the first staff. The thirty-seventh section (measures 289-296) is marked with a '53' above the first staff. The thirty-eighth section (measures 297-304) is marked with a '54' above the first staff. The thirty-ninth section (measures 305-312) is marked with a '55' above the first staff. The fortieth section (measures 313-320) is marked with a '56' above the first staff. The forty-first section (measures 321-328) is marked with a '57' above the first staff. The forty-second section (measures 329-336) is marked with a '58' above the first staff. The forty-third section (measures 337-344) is marked with a '59' above the first staff. The forty-fourth section (measures 345-352) is marked with a '60' above the first staff. The forty-fifth section (measures 353-360) is marked with a '61' above the first staff. The forty-sixth section (measures 361-368) is marked with a '62' above the first staff. The forty-seventh section (measures 369-376) is marked with a '63' above the first staff. The forty-eighth section (measures 377-384) is marked with a '64' above the first staff. The forty-ninth section (measures 385-392) is marked with a '65' above the first staff. The fiftieth section (measures 393-400) is marked with a '66' above the first staff. The fifty-first section (measures 401-408) is marked with a '67' above the first staff. The fifty-second section (measures 409-416) is marked with a '68' above the first staff. The fifty-third section (measures 417-424) is marked with a '69' above the first staff. The fifty-fourth section (measures 425-432) is marked with a '70' above the first staff. The fifty-fifth section (measures 433-440) is marked with a '71' above the first staff. The fifty-sixth section (measures 441-448) is marked with a '72' above the first staff. The fifty-seventh section (measures 449-456) is marked with a '73' above the first staff. The fifty-eighth section (measures 457-464) is marked with a '74' above the first staff. The fifty-ninth section (measures 465-472) is marked with a '75' above the first staff. The sixtieth section (measures 473-480) is marked with a '76' above the first staff. The sixty-first section (measures 481-488) is marked with a '77' above the first staff. The sixty-second section (measures 489-496) is marked with a '78' above the first staff. The sixty-third section (measures 497-504) is marked with a '79' above the first staff. The sixty-fourth section (measures 505-512) is marked with a '80' above the first staff. The sixty-fifth section (measures 513-520) is marked with a '81' above the first staff. The sixty-sixth section (measures 521-528) is marked with a '82' above the first staff. The sixty-seventh section (measures 529-536) is marked with a '83' above the first staff. The sixty-eighth section (measures 537-544) is marked with a '84' above the first staff. The sixty-ninth section (measures 545-552) is marked with a '85' above the first staff. The seventieth section (measures 553-560) is marked with a '86' above the first staff. The seventy-first section (measures 561-568) is marked with a '87' above the first staff. The seventy-second section (measures 569-576) is marked with a '88' above the first staff. The seventy-third section (measures 577-584) is marked with a '89' above the first staff. The seventy-fourth section (measures 585-592) is marked with a '90' above the first staff. The seventy-fifth section (measures 593-600) is marked with a '91' above the first staff. The seventy-sixth section (measures 601-608) is marked with a '92' above the first staff. The seventy-seventh section (measures 609-616) is marked with a '93' above the first staff. The seventy-eighth section (measures 617-624) is marked with a '94' above the first staff. The seventy-ninth section (measures 625-632) is marked with a '95' above the first staff. The eightieth section (measures 633-640) is marked with a '96' above the first staff. The eighty-first section (measures 641-648) is marked with a '97' above the first staff. The eighty-second section (measures 649-656) is marked with a '98' above the first staff. The eighty-third section (measures 657-664) is marked with a '99' above the first staff. The eighty-fourth section (measures 665-672) is marked with a '100' above the first staff. The eighty-fifth section (measures 673-680) is marked with a '101' above the first staff. The eighty-sixth section (measures 681-688) is marked with a '102' above the first staff. The eighty-seventh section (measures 689-696) is marked with a '103' above the first staff. The eighty-eighth section (measures 697-704) is marked with a '104' above the first staff. The eighty-ninth section (measures 705-712) is marked with a '105' above the first staff. The ninetieth section (measures 713-720) is marked with a '106' above the first staff. The ninety-first section (measures 721-728) is marked with a '107' above the first staff. The ninety-second section (measures 729-736) is marked with a '108' above the first staff. The ninety-third section (measures 737-744) is marked with a '109' above the first staff. The ninety-fourth section (measures 745-752) is marked with a '110' above the first staff. The ninety-fifth section (measures 753-760) is marked with a '111' above the first staff. The ninety-sixth section (measures 761-768) is marked with a '112' above the first staff. The ninety-seventh section (measures 769-776) is marked with a '113' above the first staff. The ninety-eighth section (measures 777-784) is marked with a '114' above the first staff. The ninety-ninth section (measures 785-792) is marked with a '115' above the first staff. The hundredth section (measures 793-800) is marked with a '116' above the first staff. The hundred-first section (measures 801-808) is marked with a '117' above the first staff. The hundred-second section (measures 809-816) is marked with a '118' above the first staff. The hundred-third section (measures 817-824) is marked with a '119' above the first staff. The hundred-fourth section (measures 825-832) is marked with a '120' above the first staff. The hundred-fifth section (measures 833-840) is marked with a '121' above the first staff. The hundred-sixth section (measures 841-848) is marked with a '122' above the first staff. The hundred-seventh section (measures 849-856) is marked with a '123' above the first staff. The hundred-eighth section (measures 857-864) is marked with a '124' above the first staff. The hundred-ninth section (measures 865-872) is marked with a '125' above the first staff. The hundred-tieth section (measures 873-880) is marked with a '126' above the first staff. The hundred-first section (measures 881-888) is marked with a '127' above the first staff. The hundred-second section (measures 889-896) is marked with a '128' above the first staff. The hundred-third section (measures 897-904) is marked with a '129' above the first staff. The hundred-fourth section (measures 905-912) is marked with a '130' above the first staff. The hundred-fifth section (measures 913-920) is marked with a '131' above the first staff. The hundred-sixth section (measures 921-928) is marked with a '132' above the first staff. The hundred-seventh section (measures 929-936) is marked with a '133' above the first staff. The hundred-eighth section (measures 937-944) is marked with a '134' above the first staff. The hundred-ninth section (measures 945-952) is marked with a '135' above the first staff. The hundred-tieth section (measures 953-960) is marked with a '136' above the first staff. The hundred-first section (measures 961-968) is marked with a '137' above the first staff. The hundred-second section (measures 969-976) is marked with a '138' above the first staff. The hundred-third section (measures 977-984) is marked with a '139' above the first staff. The hundred-fourth section (measures 985-992) is marked with a '140' above the first staff. The hundred-fifth section (measures 993-1000) is marked with a '141' above the first staff.

The Kyrie begins with a slow and building imitation with each voice entering on a whole note after the alto, tenor I, and bass begin with a shared entrance. This Kyrie follows the common method of setting the piece in ternary form which reflects the format of the text. After this opening with a notable rising line in the cantus voices, the B section with the “*Christe eleison*” text reduces forces to four voices - both cantus lines, the alto, and the first tenor. This B section lacks any internal resolutions as the reduced voices present phrases that roll past and against each other in exemplary counterpoint. The return of the “*Kyrie eleison*” text begins with more grandeur than the first presentation and is a more declamatory interpretation of the text.

³² Victoria, Thomás Luis de. *Officium Defunctorum á 6*. Edited by Lewis Jones. Choral Public Domain Library, 2011.

The subsequent Gradual contains a new interpretation of the “*Dona eis domine et lux perpetua luceat eis*” text. Victoria again adds an unexpected moment of D major as he did in the first iteration of this text in the second movement but this time as a cadence arriving before the introduction of “*et lux perpetua*,” perhaps anticipating it. This section of the movement, and the use of this text, also concludes with a D major cadence.

The sanctus consists of three short sections divided by incipits in A major, D minor, and G major, respectively. In the second section, it is not surprising that someone as devout as Victoria would set the text, “*Caeli et terra gloria tua. Hosana in excelsis*” in a way that represents the glory discussed in the text. In Victoria’s setting of the Requiem text, he is not adding any extraneous ideas as later composers will, he is focused on magnifying the liturgical message of the text, and in this case, the glory of his God. The concluding Benedictus section experiments with imitation, and provides a relatively calm finish when juxtaposed with the previous section.

The thickly-textured Agnus Dei retains the D minor and G major tonalities of the previous movement. Again Victoria’s devout catholicism emerges here as he addresses the Lamb of God with a reverent musical connotation fitted to the concept with especially consonant writing. This movement communicates intimacy as it asks for rest for the departed. The next movement, the motet *Versa est in luctum*, contains relatively more chromaticism and its most stunning moment is when the top two voices trade sustained passages on an E5 that contrast the rest of the texture (see example 3) Musicologist Robert Stevenson agrees in his article on the composer declaring, “a passage such as the setting of the words ‘*nihil enim sunt dies mei*’ in *Versa est in luctum* from the Office of the Dead do indeed have a poignancy rarely encountered in other music of the period.”³³

³³ Stevenson, “Victoria, Tomás Luis De.”

Example 3: Motectum: Versa est in luctum, the beginning of the “*nihil enim sunt dies mei*” section³⁴

32

C. I. mi - hi Do - mi - ne ni - hil e - nim sunt di - es me - i, ni - hil e - nim sunt di -

C. II. hi Do - mi - ne ni - hil e - nim sunt di - es me - i, _____

A. par - ce mi - hi Do - mi - ne ni - hil e - nim sunt di - es me -

T. I. mi - hi Do - mi - ne ni - hil e - nim sunt di - es me - i,

T. II. ce mi - hi Do - mi - ne ni - hil e - nim sunt di - es me - i, _____ ni -

B. par - ce mi - hi Do - mi - ne ni - hil e - nim sunt

The Requiem closes with the Responsory containing the Libera me, Dies irae, and Kyrie texts broken up into verses. While the setting of the opening Libera seems to yearn as does the text, it is solemn and brief. The entrance of the “*Quando caeli movendi sunt et terra*” text is very forceful compared to the usual staggered entrances of this work at large - indeed moving the heavens and earth. These word paintings could be viewed as emblematic of Victoria’s strong and literal faith or merely as the influence of madrigalism, or perhaps a mixture of both. The subsequent judgment by fire, though, is conveyed through chant, which is an especially substantial contrast to the preceding material. “*Tremens factus sum ego*” follows and compared to many settings that take advantage of the particularly evocative idea of “trembling” in their musical gestures, Victoria gives no special treatment to these words. The only element that could

³⁴ Victoria, *Officium Defunctorum á 6*

be argued to conform to that tradition would be that he reduces his vocal forces, which he has not done since the Kyrie, and now to even less leaving only the second cantus, alto, and bass. One could certainly interpret that the fear found in “*tremens*” is represented by this quieting.

With the retrospective knowledge of the many bombastic Dies irae settings to come after Victoria’s time, such as Verdi’s, Victoria’s seems especially calm and brief. He begins with chordal texture, the opening chord being D minor, and as the “*calamitatis...*” text arrives, there is more movement but still less so than at other points in this work. After the text has been stated one time, the section concludes with picardy third in D major. Considering the essential nature of the Dies irae text in defining the form, this setting is notable in it brushes by the it without much thought. This may give us a glimpse into Victoria’s own theological values, placing less of an emphasis on the fear of hell and more on, perhaps, the grace of the Lamb of God, to which he gives much more attention.

All voices rejoin the texture when Victoria sets the “*Requiem aeternam*” text for the first time. (Thus far, it has only been presented in chant, not set in polyphony by the composer.) He adds a lilting imitative gesture for “*lux perpetua*” representing the concept which emerges many times in this setting. He briefly returns to the Libera me text and then repeats exactly his previous setting of “*quando caeli movendi sunt et terra.*” The work concludes with a simple and largely chordal setting of the Kyrie text with movement mostly by whole notes. The first and last lines of the text are set by the composer polyphonically and the middle line is presented in chant.

Stylistically, this Requiem “has been seen as the quintessence of Spanish sacred music of the Golden Age, and more broadly as the pathos-laden soundtrack accompanying Renaissance music’s final exit from the stage of Western music history.”³⁵ While remaining buoyant, it creates space for grief and is reflective of Victoria’s own theological certainty. As is the liturgical intent

³⁵ Noone, “Owen Rees, The Requiem of Tomás Luis de Victoria. Cambridge and New York,” 314.

of the form, this Requiem is used less to explore the unanswerable questions of death, but instead it declares that it has the answers and marvels at God. While Victoria's setting is certainly unique with much compositional prowess, it is representative of where the Requiem began - a departure point from which future composers reimagined the form.

Chapter 2: Brahms - A Human Requiem

Between the Requiem settings of Victoria and Brahms, there is a century and a half of development of the Requiem and musical composition at large. Paving the way for Brahms was firstly the advent of the inclusion of instruments in the Requiem beginning in the Baroque era. The subsequent migration from the church to the concert hall vastly altered the course of the form, shifting its commissioners, audience, purpose, degree of intimacy, and potential. Mozart's *Requiem in D Minor* (1791) is an obvious giant existing in the space between Victoria and Brahms and at the onset of these changes. While it is revered for its musical prowess, the composition has also gained popularity from the immense lore surrounding its completion following Mozart's early death. After all, it is difficult not to be intrigued by the concept of a composer essentially writing their own Requiem. Mozart's composition also looks forward to the complete development of the secular Requiem of later centuries, with some already classifying it as such. Around the time that Brahms himself would have been a witness, the size of the standard orchestra increased as well, paving the way for the substantial forces of his Requiem. With the concert Requiem decidedly established and Romanticism flourishing, Brahms was well-positioned to write precisely the Requiem that he did.

It is impossible to discuss compositions that changed the nature and future of the Requiem without exploring Johannes Brahms' (1833–1897) *Ein Deutsches Requiem* (1868). The most common narrative one may encounter in a cursory investigation into the work is the idea that this Requiem was composed for the living, rather than the dead. In his masterwork, Brahms does not focus on evoking prayers for the immortal souls of the departed but rather seeks reassurance for the living - the grieving - who remain. With more investigation, one may come across the slightly more refined assertion that the piece is “a personal philosophical statement on

the need for comfort by those who survive the dead.”³⁶ This seems to stem from his own belief system, which decidedly did not include the typical tenets of the Catholic ritual. In his own upbringing in Hamburg in the mid-nineteenth century, he received traditional Lutheran teaching and guidance, but as he grew older, he fell away from any orthodox convictions. Brahms was “at once a freethinker and a student of the Bible.”³⁷ It was a text he turned to in times of need, especially with questions of death and immortality, but his beliefs were complex.³⁸ In the 1870s and 80s, he maintained a lengthy discussion with a group of friends about the concept of a “godless” Christianity.³⁹ Coupled with his long-standing interest in literature and philosophy, Brahms had a thorough understanding of the bible, but that understanding was colored by his view that the text was a critical element of his German identity, rather than simply the word of God. This outlook is evidenced by his consistent avoidance of setting passages in which Jesus is mentioned by name, including any text venerating his crucifixion; this was not the value of the bible for Brahms.

Brahms was not alone in this regard. This phenomenon is referred to as “cultural Protestantism,” and it can be seen widely among his contemporaries. This sensibility was particularly middle-class and was influential enough that German culture was understood to be inherently Protestant, and cultural Protestantism was viewed in a decidedly positive light as a representation of progress.⁴⁰ In opposition to that, Catholicism was ridiculed and viewed as politically suspicious, a stance with which Brahms agreed. When considering his sacred compositions it is important to keep this context in mind. As musicologists Natasha Loges and

³⁶ Beller-McKenna, Daniel. *Brahms and the German Spirit*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004, 65.

³⁷ Loges, Natasha, and Katy Hamilton, eds. *Brahms in Context*. Composers in Context. Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019, 265.

³⁸ Breden, Sharon. “Brahms on Death and Destiny: Philosophical, Theological, and Musical Implications.” *The Choral Journal* 38, no. 2 (1997): 9.

³⁹ Loges and Hamilton, *Brahms in Context*, 283.

⁴⁰ Loges and Hamilton, *Brahms in Context*, 263.

Katy Hamilton eloquently state, “for Brahms the cultural Protestant, Luther’s theology was largely beside the point. Protestantism represented for him freedom from ecclesiastical mandates, secularism and national self-determination; it was the source of modern German culture and, suitably modernised and secularised, the basis for a new and progressive political life.”⁴¹ Max Kalbeck, a close friend of the composer, illustrates Brahms’ style of nationalism as a “heartfelt, stubbornly devoted, and almost childlike patriotism.”⁴²

In Brahms’ mind, this outlook on the Luther Bible was accompanied by a significant interest in philosophy and literature - both of his time and before. This can be evidenced by his personal practices such as keeping a log of proverbs and philosophical ideas he found significant.⁴³ In Natasha Loges and Katy Hamilton’s book *Brahms in Context*, as has already been referenced, they explore the composer’s fascinating marginalia and philosophical outlook. A sampling of their research will be shared here, and their insights inform much of this discussion of the composer. His library reveals his philosophical inclinations with annotated texts from Herder, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, and anthologies boasting Kant, Locke, Cartesius, Frederick the Great, Marcus Aurelius, Rousseau, Plato, Leibnitz, Cicero, and St-Pierre. His interest in literature and philosophy also seems to have informed his retreat from religious dogma. According to fellow musician Josef Suk, in 1896, Brahms shared his reservations about the steadfast religious outlook of Dvorak’s saying, “I have read too much Schopenhauer, and things appear much differently to me.”⁴⁴ For instance, Brahms’s copy of Schopenhauer’s 1851 *Parerga und Paralipomena* is thoroughly annotated in his signature blue pencil, especially in sections exploring consciousness, dreams, and the “intuitively perceiving intellect.”⁴⁵ While

⁴¹ Loges and Hamilton, *Brahms in Context*, 267.

⁴² Loges and Hamilton, *Brahms in Context*, 268.

⁴³ Loges and Hamilton, *Brahms in Context*, 277.

⁴⁴ Loges and Hamilton, *Brahms in Context*, 281.

⁴⁵ Loges and Hamilton, *Brahms in Context*, 281.

reading Schopenhauer, he also gave attention through annotation to criticism of the Bible and anti-clericalism - ideas that he shared. In his copy of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Der Antichrist* (1895), the author's statement that "if we never get rid of Christianity, the Germans will be to blame," received an exclamation mark from Brahms in the margin.

In this way, his literary and philosophical interests influenced his religious views, and all of these together influenced his music. He was also intrigued by tragedy, again apparent in his life at large but evidenced in annotations. This time through those of the Goethe-Schiller correspondence in which he marked related insights from ancient times such as Aristotle's definition of tragedy in Letter 498. He also had a strong interest in the tragic plays of *Sophocles*. A friend, Gustav Wendt, even dedicated his translation of *Sophocles* to Brahms in 1884. All of these interests arguably meet in his choice to set the Requiem mass.

This Requiem was inspired by both the passing of Brahms's mother in 1865 and his mentor, composer Robert Schumann, in 1856. In this way, this composition still maintains the initial Requiem purpose of commemorating a specific death - or in this case, two. The masterwork was decidedly personal to its composer. It was composed over fourteen years, essentially in three phases. The original six-movement work premiered to an enthusiastic reception in Bremen on April 10th, 1868 - Good Friday with another performance three weeks after. Following these, Brahms composed a movement for a soprano solo and choir - what we now know to be the fifth movement. This movement was written from his father's home in Hamburg in the spring of 1868. As it is arguably the most intimate of the seven movements, it elicits additional biographical - but speculative - interpretations, such as that it may be an elegy for Brahms's mother. The complete seven-movement Requiem was then published and premiered on February 19th, 1869 in Leipzig. The work was titled *Ein Deutsches Requiem* (A

German Requiem) reflecting that it is a culmination of many of the ideas previously discussed such as Brahms' nationalism and cultural Protestantism. In this way, the title references more than simply the language of the composition. Brahms suggested that an alternative title for this work would be the “Human Requiem,” perhaps revealing his own interpretation of the work as a Requiem that is focused on people rather than the divine, speaking to the shared and personal experience of loss.

This Requiem is a masterwork for choir, orchestra (of typical Romantic proportions), and soprano and bass-baritone soloists. With his other famous choral works being secular compositions such as *Nänie*, the *Liebeslieder Waltzes*, *Alto Rhapsody*, *Triumphlied*, or *Schicksalslied*, it is Brahms’ largest work on Biblical texts. These selections were taken from the King James Version of the Bible in German and do not include any of the typical Requiem Mass text. This use of the local vernacular makes the work more accessible and further emphasizes its mission to be for the people as well as its nationalism. That said, Brahms himself said the work could be performed in English, perhaps emphasizing the importance of the vernacular. As previously stated, a common thread through this work is the idea of comfort, or *Trost* in the German, as is a central tenet of Professor Daniel Beller-McKenna’s analysis. The first text sung by the choir is “*Selig sind, die da Leid tragen, denn sie sollen getröstet werden*” (“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted”). This text is Matthew 5:4. Then again the last text in the fifth movement reads, “*Ich will euch trösten, wie Einen seine Mutter tröstet*” (“As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you”) (Isaiah 66:13). The theme of comfort remains present throughout the work in many ways less explicit as well.

While Brahms denied using unifying motives in the work, most analysts agree they are present.⁴⁶ Arguably the most prominent is the F–A–B-flat motive (in its initial form) which is first heard at measure 15 of the first movement in the soprano line (see example 4). Subsequent variations include B-flat–G–F, F–G–B-flat, and B-flat–A–F, and instances vary greatly in rhythm. The motive is heard a total of 628 times including all variations.⁴⁷ Brahms also incorporates his personal motto “*Frei, aber Froh*” (“free, but happy”) into the work represented through the pitches F–A–F. This can be seen in one instance at m. 150 of the first movement in the soprano and tenor lines.⁴⁸ As the composer affirmed, there is also underlying use of a chorale theme, but there is some disagreement among musicologists as to which chorale this is. That said, all contenders were used by Bach, whom Brahms greatly admired.

Example 4: Sixth movement, mm. 11-22, the critical F–A–B-flat motive can be seen in the first soprano entrance⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Van Camp, Leonard. *A practical guide for performing, teaching, and singing the Brahms Requiem*. Miami, Fla.: Lawson-Gould Music Publishers ; Warner Bros. Publications [distributor], 2002, 68.

⁴⁷ Van Camp, *A practical guide for performing, teaching, and singing the Brahms Requiem*, 70.

⁴⁸ Van Camp, *A practical guide for performing, teaching, and singing the Brahms Requiem*, 73.

⁴⁹ Brahms, Johannes. *German Requiem in Full Score*. Edited by Eusebius Mandyczewski. The Breitkopf & Härtel complete works editions. New York: Dover, 1987.

11

Fl.
Ob.
Fag.
Hr. (F)
Pos.
Harfe

Se - lig sind, se. lig sind, die da Leid tra - gen,
Se - lig sind, se. lig sind, die da Leid tra -
Se - lig sind, se. lig sind, die da Leid tra -
Se - lig sind, se. - - lig sind, die da Leid tra -

dim. *pp*
dim. *pp*
dim. *pp*
dim. *pp*
Pedal

The first movement revolves around the idea of grief and the blessings it sows (Matthew 5:4, Psalm 126:5, 6). It famously excludes violins resulting in a tone that communicates the solemn darkness of grief very effectively. The movement begins in F major so quietly it is barely perceptible, slowly gaining richness as the first vocal entrance approaches to announce “*Selig sind die Toten*” (“blessed are the dead”) - the first introduction of the first motive discussed above. Brahms’ skill for vocal writing is immediately revealed as the voices sing *a capella* for the initial few phrases. With the text “*Die mit Tränen säen, werden mit Freuden ernten*” (“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy”), after a reserved introduction, joy takes over the texture in a fugal style. On the word “*weinen*” (“weep”), Brahms takes advantage of the opportunity to illustrate that evocative verb through a winding soprano line that does indeed seem to weep. The movement ends with a repetition of “*sie sollen getröstet werden,*” establishing comfort as a central idea. This movement also foreshadows the wide variety of emotions and connotations present in the work.

Immediately in this composition, the influences of the Romantic era are apparent. Recognizable traits of the nineteenth century such as increased chromaticism, larger forces, and more overt expression markings are all present. Brahms stands in the shadow of Beethoven, as do most Romantic composers, as he was a prime innovator who solidified these new directions in music. The pressure of Beethoven was particularly felt by Brahms - he took fourteen years composing his first symphony out of fear it would pale in comparison to those of Beethoven. The influences of the master composer are certainly present in Brahms’ compositions, including this one.

The second movement explores patience and the inevitability of death (1 Peter 1:24, James 5:7, Isaiah 35:10). It opens in B-flat minor and we hear the violins for the first time in the

work although the tone is still somber. The piccolo, clarinet, trumpet, and timpani also all appear in the movement for the first time, but their absence in the first movement is less notable. The voices enter in a low and quiet tessitura, without the soprano, telling us that “*denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras*” (“for all flesh is as grass”). He illustrates patience with a lilting middle section in G-flat major which includes a hallmark setting of the text “*den Morgenregen und Abendregen*” (“the morning rain and evening rain”) for which the farmer waits. The sustained notes on “regen” illustrate the patience that the movement lauds. There are subsequently a few measures where all is tacet except for the horns on sustained octaves, forcing the audience to experience that patience. Following a repeat of the opening 71 bars, there is a sudden transition to the forceful and victorious (in B-flat major) announcement “*aber des Herrn Wort bleibt in Ewigkeit*” (“but the word of the Lord endures forever”) followed by a fugue. This is one of the many moments in this work when one could infer that Brahms’ religious convictions are revealed in his compositional choices. In this moment, it could be argued that rather than making a dogmatic statement about God, Brahms instead utilizes the text to create comfort - in this case through the idea that some things are unchanging and that all will end well (as the rest of the movement triumphantly tells us).

The ephemerality of life and the ideal of righteousness over vanity are asserted in the third movement (Psalm 39:4-7, Wisdom of Solomon 3:1). The movement is an exchange between the bass-baritone soloist and choir with many repeating musical gestures among both. The most notable is the sixteenth note figure which rises two steps (both whole and half in different iterations) and then returns to where it began. Following increased agitation with the acknowledgment of how frail human lives are, the text describing the vanity of humankind is paired with intertwining cantabile phrases in the orchestra. There is then a slow crescendo into

chaos with the arrival of the text “*Nun Herr, wes soll ich mich trösten?*” (“And now, Lord, what wait I for?”). This is achieved first through a forte polyphonic explosion in the voices with much imitation first paired with triplets in the strings and later with pulsing staccato accompaniment from nearly all members of the orchestra. This question is answered by a victorious response that “*Ich hoffe auf dich*” (“My hope is in thee”) with an illustrative rising melody on “*hoffe*” (“hope”) passed between vocal parts. This emphasis on a resolution in hope is yet another moment that is indicative of Brahms’ overall approach to the Requiem with a focus not on the dead but on those who remain living and their needs. The movement finishes triumphantly declaring that “*Der Gerechten Seelen sind in Gottes Hand und keine Qual rühret sie an*” (“But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them”), returning somewhat to a traditional Requiem message.

The fourth movement glorifies the dwelling places of the Lord (Psalm 84:1, 2, 4) in E-flat major and its dominant. It musically represents the idea of praise with a buoyant fugue section following the more reserved beginnings. This movement arguably communicates the most happiness musically than any other movement, first in a placid way then with more force in the fugue section through the idea of praise. One could argue that the way this movement stands out with a slightly different musical tone harkens back to the Bachian habit of chiastic writing in which the middle movement acts as a fulcrum with the movements on either side in mirrored pairs.

The slow and legato fifth movement returns to the central dichotomy of grief and comfort beginning “*Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit; aber ich will euch wieder sehen und euer Herz soll sich freuen und eure Freund soll niemand von euch nehmen.*” (“And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and our heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”)

(John 16:22). This is perhaps the most direct exploration of grief yet but is coated in a confident hope. This movement also contains the highly bibliographic text “*Ich will euch trösten, wie Einen seine Mutter tröstet*” (“As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you”) and is an exchange between the soprano soloist and choir. As previously mentioned, this movement is often thought to be an elegy for his mother and was the last to be written. It could also be argued that it answers the baritone’s need for reassurance in movement three.⁵⁰

The sixth movement contains the classic text, “*Tod, wo ist dein Stachel? Hölle, wo ist dein Sieg?*” (“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”) (1 Corinthians 15:55). This textual moment is arguably that which most closely approaches a theme of the original, liturgical Requiem text, discussing the trumpets of judgment day, similarly to the Tuba mirum of the critical Sequence text. That said, it does so with less fear than a Dies irae and more triumph, as represented by that hallmark text. With the first mention of these trumpets, the music grows bombastic, as a Dies irae typically is, with *sforzandos* on the third beats of this triple meter. This heightened energy only grows with the “*Tod, wo ist dein Stachel?...*” text. It becomes arguably the climax of the entire work, fitting with the Dies irae archetype. Brahms perseverates on “*wo*” (“where”) with explosive and harmonically tense outbursts from choir and orchestra between near-complete measures of silence (see example 5). The last section of the movement is celebratory in a fugue.

Example 5: Sixth movement, mm. 191-198, outbursts of “*wo*” coupled with silence⁵¹

⁵⁰ Beller-McKenna, *Brahms and the German Spirit*, 68.

⁵¹ Brahms, *German requiem*.

The final movement begins in response to the text of the first movement. In the same F major key, it adds “*Selig sind die Toten*” (“Blessed are the dead”) - with some minor melodic inflections on the central melodic motive - to “*Selig sind, die da Leid tragen*,” (“Blessed are they that mourn”). Near the end though, Brahms returns to the opening theme precisely, presented in various tonalities, creating a full-circle continuity with the opening. This text then reassures its listener that the dead may rest and that “*denn ihre Werke folgen ihnen nach*” (“and their works do follow them”). While this movement has a relatively sparse texture orchestrally as a baseline, when Brahms introduces this line of text he does so a cappella, calling particular attention to it - a reassurance.

This movement, and the work at large, ends with a meditation on the word “*selig*,” which seems fitting for Brahms’ personal approach to the requiem. He is an innovator of the Requiem both in his choice to use exclusively original text selections in a vernacular and in his shift of the focus of such works to the living instead of the dead. This work continues to resonate as it provides reassurance from grief and values that are more generalized than the dogmatic traditional text. This makes *Ein Deutsches Requiem* speak to a wide variety of audiences through its universal truths and timelessly evocative music.

Chapter 3: Britten - A New Direction

If one were to ask a musician to name an innovative Requiem, the answer would often be “Britten’s *War Requiem*.” This is for good reason, as it is an unprecedented masterwork. Instead of speaking to typical liturgical aims and the death of a specific person, the composition uses the traditional form as a vehicle for a pacifist, anti-war statement and memorializes the deaths of many. Britten once shared, “I suppose it is the piece I hope will be remembered longest. But that is not because of the music, it is because of the message contained within, which I hope will be used for many years to come.”⁵² Similar to the Brahms, this work is a direct result of its context, meaning that in order to understand the work, one must first be familiar with the world of Benjamin Britten.

The composer was born in Lowestoft, England - the easternmost point of the country - on November 22nd, 1913, which just so happens to be Saint Cecilia’s Day - Saint Cecilia being the patron saint of music. To his mother, one can trace the musical roots of the family as she was a pianist and sang in the Bach Choir and the Lowestoft Choral Society as a mezzo-soprano and often a soloist.⁵³ His maternal uncles were all musicians as well. Britten was a fixture on the piano and in the summers, listeners would congregate below the open windows.⁵⁴ His sister, Beth Britten, describes her brother and the family dynamic saying, “what a joy he must have been to his parents, after three ordinary children to give birth to a Benjamin who excelled in all he did. How proud they were, how anxious too, to do the right thing for him; not to hold him back but also not to exploit his genius.”⁵⁵

⁵² Foster, Michael. *The Idea Was Good: The Story of Benjamin Britten’s War Requiem*. Coventry: Coventry Cathedral Books, 2012, 19.

⁵³ Britten, *My Brother Benjamin*, 18.

⁵⁴ Britten, *My Brother Benjamin*, xiii.

⁵⁵ Britten, *My Brother Benjamin*, xiv.

Britten grew up decidedly Christian but this did not stick with him into adulthood. He is widely recognized to have had very firm moral convictions but such beliefs did not inherently connect to a Christian outlook. That said, those who were close to Britten often claim he indeed had such a perspective, and counter (or elaborate on) the common categorization of the composer as agnostic. As his long-time partner, Peter Pears has said, “he was an agnostic with a great love for Jesus Christ.”⁵⁶ Compositions in liturgical forms do not make up a substantial subset of Britten’s oeuvre, but he did write prominent sacred compositions such as *The Company of Heaven* (1937), *A Ceremony of Carols* (1942), and *Noye’s Fludde* (1958). There are also many ways in which religious ideas or texts feature in secular works. For instance, in his opera *The Rape of Lucretia* (written 1945–1946), Britten insisted on the inclusion of a decidedly Christian underpinning for the epilogue. Following a critical reception of the premiere, he wrote to fellow British composer Imogen Holst, “I used to think that the day when one could shock people was over - but now, I’ve discovered that being simple and considering things spiritual of importance, produces violent reactions!”⁵⁷ Speaking specifically to Britten’s religious leanings, Pears explains, “he was religious in the general sense of acknowledging a power above greater than ourselves, but he wasn’t a regular church-goer. In his moral attitudes, he was Low Church, and therefore inclined to be puritanical.” Similarly, American pianist Murray Perahia recounts that upon being asked if he thought himself to be religious, Britten “replied that he was certainly Christian in his music. Although he could not accept Church doctrine, he believed in God and a destiny.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Elliott, Graham. *Benjamin Britten: The Spiritual Dimension*. Oxford Studies in British Church Music. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, 4-5.

⁵⁷ Elliott, *Benjamin Britten*, 3.

⁵⁸ Elliott, *Benjamin Britten*, 2.

War was a part of Britten's life for as long as he could remember. His mother's youngest brother, Frederick, was an organist before he was killed in 1916 in World War I. Britten's mother kept a bloodstained pocketbook of his and growing up, it intrigued Benjamin and his siblings.⁵⁹ When he was nine months old, the First World War began. In her account, his older sister provides a revealing anecdote about the early presence of war in the composer's life. The background needed is that since Benjamin was such a sweet-looking child, he was called "dear" so frequently that he believed it to be his own name. One day, he woke crying to say, "bomb dropped on Dear's head"⁶⁰ - Britten knew what a bomb was before he accurately grasped his own name. (At that age, "Dear" was also announcing his intent to play the piano.)⁶¹ His hometown felt both wars quite directly, with fires from bombings so close the sky above their house grew bright.⁶² Britten's sister recalls that "although Ben was very young during the [first] war, he was aware of all that was going on round him. Because of this my father was worried about keeping us all in such a dangerous place, but decided that it was better that we should all stay together...So he had the cellar of the house fortified and made comfortable with chairs and warm clothes and emergency rations."⁶³

It is within this context of omnipresent war that Britten's pacifism became a central tenet of his outlook on all life (and one of the biographical details for which he is best known). As a schoolboy, he wrote an essay denouncing animal cruelty - pacificism being evident as a core value of his from a young age. This conviction was also strengthened by his mentor, composer Frank Bridge, whose own pacifism often featured in his discussions with Britten.⁶⁴ Britten illuminates the roots of this philosophical cornerstone explaining, "since I believe that there is in

⁵⁹ Britten, *My Brother Benjamin*, 18.

⁶⁰ Britten, *My Brother Benjamin*, 31.

⁶¹ Britten, *My Brother Benjamin*, 31.

⁶² Britten, *My Brother Benjamin*, 34.

⁶³ Britten, *My Brother Benjamin*, 34.

⁶⁴ Foster, *The Idea Was Good*, 29.

every man the spirit of God, I cannot destroy, and I feel it is my duty to avoid helping to destroy as far as I am able, human life, however strongly I may disapprove of the individual's actions or thoughts. The whole of my life has been devoted to acts of creation (being by profession a composer) and I cannot take part in acts of destruction."⁶⁵ This pacifism became "a fully realised obsession."⁶⁶ As is relevant to the exploration of the *War Requiem* in particular, poet Wilfred Owen, whose texts are set in the work, shared Britten's pacifist sentiments and cited Christian morals.⁶⁷

The topic of Britten's sexuality was delicately avoided by those writing about him contemporaneously.⁶⁸ In researching Britten today, discussion of his sexuality is one of the most prominent non-musical topics to encounter - if not the most. It leaves a researcher to wonder if Britten's sexuality is actually the most interesting element of his life and compositional career on which to persevere. Arguably, the essential point to extrapolate is simply the understanding that Britten was somewhat of an outsider, writing on the edges of societal norms. To place too much emphasis on this issue dangerously risks losing sight of other critical influences and placing Britten's music into an unnecessary pigeonhole. Unfortunately for this discussion of his *War Requiem*, there is significantly less discussion of his spirituality than his sexuality, despite the former likely having a greater influence on his compositions.

The *War Requiem* was commissioned by St. Michael's Cathedral in Coventry to celebrate its Consecration in May 1962 (the piece having been completed in 1961). The cathedral - the largest parish church in England - had been destroyed in the Second World War on the night of November 14th, 1940 following an attack on the city by over 500 German planes. Following

⁶⁵ Foster, *The Idea Was Good*. Content noted as "Submission to Local Tribunal for Conscientious Objectors 4 May 1942"

⁶⁶ Foster, *The Idea Was Good*, 29.

⁶⁷ Foster, *The Idea Was Good*.

⁶⁸ Elliott, *Benjamin Britten*, 35.

the destruction, there was a near-immediate intention to rebuild, but it was difficult to acquire licensing from the government for a non-essential building during this time of reconstruction. The consecration of the new cathedral was celebrated with a three-week music festival of grand proportions at which Britten's commissioned work was a centerpiece.

The text of the piece consists of the traditional Requiem text intermingled with Wilfred Owen's First World War poetry. The musical forces required for the War Requiem are substantial, with a chorus, children's chorus, soprano, tenor, and baritone soloists, full orchestra (playing with the choir singing the Mass text), chamber orchestra (playing with the tenor and baritone soloists sharing the Wilfred Owen text), and organ (for the children's choir). The piece consists of six movements titled after the traditional Requiem text: Requiem aeternam, Dies irae, Offertorium, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, and Libera me.

Britten gave the work a staging concept as well - that it is to be performed within three distinct areas. In doing this, "Britten wanted to convey the deafness, blindness and indifference of people towards each other, especially when they are on opposite sides in war."⁶⁹ In this staging, the tenor and baritone soloists with their chamber orchestra are closest to the audience, representing the victims of war and arguably communicating in the most personal tone. Behind them are the chorus and full orchestra representing mourners in a more formalized capacity, along with the soprano soloist. Farthest is the children's choir and their accompanying organ. They are ethereal and distant. This massive collection of groups is coordinated by at least two, and often three, conductors for each ensemble or space. It is not difficult to summarize the central message of Britten's *War Requiem*, its title being the first clue. The work "essentially... concerns the brutality and futility of war; the senseless suffering, monstrous death and the

⁶⁹ Foster, *The Idea Was Good*, 13.

destruction that it brings.”⁷⁰ Another theme present in the work, often seen in Britten’s operas, is the loss of innocence - a natural companion to the central topic.

Opening the Requiem are bells, a gong, and the orchestra playing its first phrase in a style that becomes a hallmark of the movement. While the bells and gong evoke churches and funerals, the orchestra plays one stunted line before giving way to voices. This phrase type - short and faltering - continues throughout the movement and keeps everything grounded. The choir enters *pianissimo* with an immediate *decrescendo* on the text “*Requiem aeternam*” - a setting not unlike many other Requiems. This quiet that creates distance remains a theme throughout the work, especially when the children’s choir sings. The idea is also represented physically through the staging as previously discussed, and it stands as a symbol of loss and people slipping through fingers.

The tritone is an immediate theme in the movement, and soon the work at large. It is introduced in the voices subtly when the lower voices respond with repeated C-naturals to the repeated F-sharps of the higher voices, but it becomes more obvious with the arrival of the “*et lux perpetua*” text, when the tritone becomes a melodic motive in imitation (see example 6). This makes an immediate differentiation between most settings of this text and Britten’s. “*Lux perpetua*” (perpetual light) is typically set in a way that exemplifies that concept - open, shimmering, or triumphant music. (Recall the onset of a bright D major tonality with this text in the Victoria). In Britten’s case though, it is dark and sharp, twisting the concept into something deformed and ironic. From the very beginning of this work, one can see that Britten is taking the ancient form and reinventing it to become something it has never been before.

⁷⁰ Foster, *The Idea Was Good*, 13.

Example 6: First movement, 1 m. before rehearsal 2 - 3 mm. after rehearsal 2, the tritone is heard in the “*et lux perpetua*” text⁷¹

This tritone remains for the rest of the movement and the ominous tone is also taken up by the orchestra. This ambiance is shifted, though, with the introduction of the children's choir. Their melodies are light and distant, and the audience is pointedly presented with the theme of loss of innocence as the children too must bear the tritone, eventually being joined by the adult choir. We then hear the tenor soloist for the first time who enters, as Britten writes in the score, "agitated" with a new musical idea. Rather than the faltering and dark chorus or the innocent children, the soloist is upset, and in this particular movement, almost evokes the role of an evangelist. The movement ends with the Kyrie text song only once through, again with the incorporation of tritones vertically. At the final chord, there is a resolution of that tritone to an F major chord, but it is done so quietly (*pppp*) that it can barely be heard.

Britten's Dies irae begins with brass - easily associated with the concept of war, which is present in a more literal and intense manner in this movement. It could also be argued that the brass represents the sounds of Judgement Day evoked in the traditional Sequence text. The brass is gradually joined by other members of the orchestra as the movement becomes an unstable 7/4 and the voices enter with the Dies irae text on disjointed, sharp quarter notes. This section of the Dies irae, which returns later in the movement, is reminiscent of the Dies irae movements of Verdi or Berlioz. It is especially reminiscent of Verdi's in the intense and clipped phrases and the bombastic melodic and dynamic descents. This opening to the movement carries essentially the thematic tone one would expect from a Dies irae, excepting a few moments that are slightly more bright and triumphant than might be standard. In choices such as this setting of the Dies irae text, Britten does retain the traditions of the Requiem, while also creating a complete reimagining.

Later in the movement, the baritone and tenor soloists sing accompanied by military-style drums, matching the brass that opened the movement. Their text carries a spiteful irony

declaring, “Death was never an enemy of ours! We laughed at him, old chum... We laughed, knowing that better men would come, and greater wars.” This text tells of the futility and destruction of war and the dangerous indifference of many. The singers persevere on the word “laughed” with awkward melodies conveying its bitterness. Following this interlude from the soloists, the altos and sopranos of the choir present a mostly *pianissimo recordare*, becoming more angular and loud at moments and reviving the evocative tritone theme. The tenors and basses then take over for the forceful *confutatis*. They progress to a stretto duet, slowing building.

We then hear from the baritone soloist again with a substantial timpani presence on a text including the concept of sin, with the lines “reach at that arrogance which needs thy harm, and beat it down before its sins grow worse. But when thy spell be cast complete and whole, may God curse thee, and cut thee from our soul!” This is a different twist on the usual presence of the idea of sin in a *Dies irae*. Where there is usually fear of the Day of Judgment and retribution for all, evoking the pits of hell, this *Dies irae* in itself directly judges and punishes others, rather than speaking to a collective fear of another entity. It is yet another way in which Britten has taken the traditional form and twisted it into something that can serve his ideological mission.

In the *Lacrimosa* section, the tenor soloist evokes a wounded soldier as an interjection, creating a direction for mourning, fear, and tears in the traditional text. The tenor returns with an existential perseveration on the text “was it for this the clay grew tall,” taking the traditional fear of the *Dies irae* and now making it a worry that we are senselessly wasting and wounding human lives. The movement concludes with a short and muted *Pie jesu* and amen on the same F major resolution chord (with even the same voicing) that concluded the first movement.

To begin the Offertorium, the audience again hears from the children's choir but this time with a much more ominous and harsh musical tone (aided by the organ), exemplifying their loss of innocence as they become a part of the musically-represented struggle. They alternate between phrases high and low in their range, in the low becoming speechlike. This dichotomy of tessitura is a literal representation of the text. "*Jesu Christe*," "*Domine*," and "*Rex gloriae*" are all high in tessitura, exemplifying glory, the heavens, and purity (the latter especially considering the color of the children's voices). The low tessitura is assigned to the *Libera me* text, representing the earthly struggles of people to do what is right, and in this case, succumbing to violence. A clear textual corroborator of Britten's musical choice is the line "*ne cadant in obscurum*" ("lest they be plunged into darkness"). At one point he sets this text on its own between two of the high tessitura phrases, functioning essentially as word painting.

While Britten did not have a lack of faith in the wonder of humankind in overall principle - humanist as he is often perceived to be - he did condemn many of the specific actions of people. Elements of his writing such as this do not intend to defame people as a scorned opposition to the glory of the divine, but rather to punish those who have strayed from the great potential of humankind. This moment with the children's choir seems to be a prayer for humankind to rise to its best possibilities and not succumb to less - likely a very personal and genuine prayer from Britten. This is one of the parts of the masterwork that reveal him changing for who, or in this case, for what, a Requiem can be set.

We soon arrive at what is nearly the literal centerpiece of the work and arguably the most salient - the retelling of the story of Abram and his son. The story is told by both tenor and baritone soloists and the tale is set with the assistance of the oboe, bassoon, and timpani with additional forces as the narrative tension progresses. The overall impression of the music perhaps

at moments evokes Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb* in the section "For I am under the same accusation with my savior," with its character of contained eagerness. While they are structurally different, both oscillate unexpectedly between moments of harmonious consonance and forceful dissonance or darkness, creating a sense of instability. Upon the arrival of the angel in the initially traditional story, a harp plays something of a heavenly fanfare of welcome and the soloists travel largely in thirds for a few phrases, adding to this ethereal ambiance. After the angel finishes its declaration (that Abram need not sacrifice his son, and will sacrifice a ram instead), the music quickly shifts. This change brings us to where the story has been twisted by Wilfred Owen. Instead of saving his son, Abram instead does indeed kill him and "half the seed of Europe, one by one."

In an effectively disturbing musical choice, Britten pairs repetitions of "half the seed of Europe, one by one" with the distant and pleasant singing children's choir - a haunting contrast. The two seem to exist in different worlds. Britten is not subtle in his methods of convincing his audience of the horrors of war, weaponizing arguably the most agreed-upon horror - the endangerment of children.

In the Sanctus, the soloist shares a desire to revive the dead and is told by age and Earth that it cannot be and Earth's tears are the sea. The subsequent Agnus Dei concludes with the tenor presenting an angular but gentle statement of "*Dona nobis pacem*." The awkward melody of that text is filled with Britten as it deviates from the manner in which that text is often set - pristine and hopeful. Britten's setting is instead painful and reserved as it communicates his pained yearning for what it evokes as well as his disgust with what instead is. It carries a duality of both desperate hope, to the point of a strained, disjointed melody, and also a lack thereof, as both are part of the composer's perspective.

The Libera me begins slowly, with *ppp* percussion in a march. The sopranos are the first to contribute the “*libera me*” text, and they do so meandering chromatically within an eerie diminished third which becomes a theme. The composer labels it as lamenting and indeed it is. It is already an intriguing twist of the traditional Libera me to have it not yearn but lament - still a desire but not for the saving of one’s soul but rather to be freed from a horror. The music stays measured and contained without any significant harmonic resolutions - it instead winds. The music eventually grows to a strong presence at which point all singers join on the text in a forceful homophony. It continues in a marchlike fashion with percussion that arguably imitates gunfire with a whip.

The tenor solo later enters with a secco recit - a stark contrast to a preceding bombastic section of music including the “*tremens factus sum ego*” text. He immediately announces “it seemed that out of battle I escaped,” evoking the musical battle from which he did indeed just emerge. The Wilfred Owen text again paints for the audience reminders of the horrors of war with ideas such as soldiers indistinguishably “too fast in thought or death to be stirred” - a chilling idea that now forces the audience to see through a soldier's eyes. One soldier recounts a loss of all hope (“and of my weeping something had been left which must die now”) showing the cost not only for those who die but also for those who remain with a tarnished perspective on life. This is part of, as the text declares, “the pity of war distilled.” Britten mourns not only the dead but also the tragedy and pain itself. This section ends by resigning that war must end with “let us sleep now.” This cues the entrance of the children’s choir singing the In paradisum text on a syllabic half-note pulse in a continuous exchange with the soloists ruminating on “let us sleep now.”

The full orchestra, choir, and soprano soloist then enter into the texture, all adopting the In paradisum text. It is a wash of color that communicates a climax but not necessarily a resolution. Britten does not allow for any such glorious music to conclude his work though. Instead, all the forces fade except for the children's choir who return to the "*Requiem aeternam*" text after a final tritone toll from the bells. This recitation is now on the significant and jarring tritone - pulsing on an F# and C-natural over silence. Everyone else does not heed this warning, though, and returns to their In paradisum with the same levity as before. Eventually, the soprano adopts the message of the children while the choir remains silent and the tenor and baritone continue with "let us sleep now." These soloists continue with the warmth of the In paradisum, though, not the darkness of the children. Lastly, the choir takes up the "*Requiem aeternam*" text as well. They give a *ppp* and harmonically eerie presentation of "*requiescant in pace*" ("rest in peace") ending on the hallmark tritone. They sing an amen which finally resolves the tritone the F major chord extremely quietly as in the conclusion of the first movement (see example 7). While this resolution is harmonically satisfying to some extent, it is barely audible and certainly contains no great relief. It then fades to nothing.

Example 7: Closing of the final movement including the resolution of the tritone in the choir⁷²

⁷² Britten, *War Requiem*, Op. 66: Full Orchestral Score.

Britten's extensive use of the Libera me is not surprising as the entire work seeks liberation from war. Britten has emphasized this element of the Requiem text and created a new implication that moves it away from the idea of the saving of one's own soul and instead, the saving of us all. This closing of the piece is powerful as he uses the children both as a tool to remind listeners of the toll of war on the innocent and its far-reaching effects. The choir sings their In paradisum in peace, but as the water begins to turn dark, they are eventually turned with it, until the entire choir sings even "*pace*" ("peace") on a tritone. It is resolved, perhaps implying peace and an end to war - or at least a hope for it - but certainly not with much confidence or reassurance. Britten tells us that war leaves no stone unturned and uses the form of the Requiem to communicate a message far outside of its initial Catholic origins. In doing so, he revolutionized the potential of the form and paved the way for future composers to write Requiems for something other than a specific death. It is a Requiem for a cause or idea.

Chapter 4: Preisner - A Contemporary Expansion

In the opening moments of Zbigniew Preisner's *Requiem for my Friend*, one feels compelled to become still and silent. The listener first meets one lone voice, perhaps evoking an incipit. The quality is chant-like and feels more like the opening of a Requiem from a contemporary, or even a predecessor, of Victoria than a work by someone who owns a cell phone. The chant line migrates, being taken up by a bass, and soon becomes two voices. The music evokes an ancient prayer with a modern sensibility throughout the harmonies of its ambling homophony. At this point, it is quite difficult to imagine that soon there will be an alto saxophone playing phrases reminiscent of jazz in the same work. Before that arrives though, this piece reminds the listener of the ancient purist's approach to the Requiem - respectful and solemn mourning.

Throughout the work, it is continually evident that Preisner's primary art is film scoring. In fact, this work was his first foray into concert music. As reporter Richard Williams creatively describes, Preisner is a "composer of film music characterized by an almost promiscuous lyricism".⁷³ Preisner illustrates his own music as "border line. It is not quite film music, and not quite classical. Somewhere in between. I make creations, creative music. I think in the Requiem I took one major aspect from film music. My music has names, the title defines it: Silence, or Peace. 'Life' is a story about life, the part we have lived, and the part we are still going to live."⁷⁴ (These are sections of the work to be discussed later.) In this way, whether film or concert, his work is programmatic and centers the practice of storytelling. While listening, it is only natural to imagine this particular work narrating moments of life. It is perhaps more fitting to the scenes

⁷³ Williams, Richard. "Music: The Music of Friendship Zbigniew Preisner Wrote the Music for the Films of Krzysztof Kieslowski; Now He Is Taking a Work Dedicated to the Late Artist into the Concert Hall. Richard Williams Saw the Premiere and Met Him." *The Guardian*. October 9, 1998, sec. The Guardian Features Page.

⁷⁴ James, Tess. "Review of Zbigniew Preisner, Requiem for My Friend." *Music Theory Online* 5, no. 4 (September 1, 1999). <https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.99.5.4/mto.99.5.4.james.html>.

of one's life than to a concert hall's isolation. Maybe for Preisner, it accompanies the experience of an extremely personal loss - becoming universal in its specificity.

The "friend" named in the title of this Requiem is Krzysztof Kieślowski, a film director, Preisner's longtime collaborator and, as the title suggests, friend. Preisner hoped the Requiem would say "something about our life and work together."⁷⁵ The composer says their relationship "was very close... We never spoke about friendship. It's something that lives inside you."⁷⁶ The fact that this work is a concert Requiem but overtly written for a single person of immense personal connection to the composer is somewhat unique. It calls to mind liturgical Requiems written for funeral audiences and evokes that intimacy in the concert hall, perhaps taking a step back from the intellectualizing and generalizing of the form seen in war Requiems and other such innovations.

Preisner and Kieślowski's collaborations began in 1983 with the film *No End*, and their projects are those for which Preisner is best known. Music was a critical component of Kieślowski's films, making Preisner an essential collaborator early in the process - earlier than is typically the case, which is something Preisner greatly valued in their collaboration. Preisner elaborates on this sharing, "I'm not very happy when someone wants me just to be the composer... For me, the music is part of the creation."⁷⁷ For one score, Preisner had the orchestra members sing while playing to create the effect of a church congregation singing. On the topic of that recording Preisner comments, "that music, in the way it went together with the film, showed Kieślowski that music is not only something played by an orchestra, but it is also some kind of philosophy - and the philosophy can have many sources." He continues to say, "From that

⁷⁵ Kimberley, Nick. "Film: Requiem for My Friend the Director The Late Polish Director Krzysztof Kieslowski Is Being Remembered in a Short Festival This Weekend. The Maker of a New Documentary Tells David Winner about the Man, While Nick Kimberley Looks at Film Music and a Work Written in Memory of the Dead Film- Maker: [FINAL Edition]." *The Independent*. March 18, 1999, sec. Features.

⁷⁶ Williams, "Music."

⁷⁷ Williams, "Music."

moment, he trusted music more and more - and by the time we got to [subsequent projects], the music was almost the centre of the spectrum. And that showed Krzysztof's courage."⁷⁸

In looking to future projects, the two were intending to write something of a combination of an opera and a mystery play along with another collaborator, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. The work was intended to be, in essence, "a concert telling a life story," and premiere at the Acropolis in Athens as the beginning of a series of such pieces and events.⁷⁹ The pair had discussed naming it *The Mystery of Life*.⁸⁰ Before this dream could be realized, as the composer writes in his dedication of the score of this Requiem, "it was life that authored a different ending: Krzysztof Kieślowski died in March of 1996."⁸¹ He was taken by a heart attack. In the hospital, he expected a bypass operation and a recovery, but that was not the outcome of his stay and it was while Kieślowski was in the hospital that Preisner began writing the Requiem.⁸² Preisner explains that the first part of the work is intended to be a farewell to Kieślowski, with the second part, not specifically mentioned in this dedication, being what this play project might have been had Kieślowski not passed. The composer explains, "the final part of the work is a prayer of Hope, asking for the strength to go on living."⁸³ This attention and care towards the grieving are reminiscent of the intentions found in Brahms' Requiem. On the topic of his own religious beliefs, Preisner shares, "I believe but do not practice. I don't need [a] middleman between myself and God."⁸⁴

Reporter Richard Williams describes Preisner as a "big, burly, rumped man," who looks like "a retired rugby player."⁸⁵ In a thought that perhaps reveals character, the composer told me,

⁷⁸ Williams, "Music."

⁷⁹ Preisner, *Zbigniew. Requiem for My Friend*. London: Chester Music, 2000.

⁸⁰ Kimberley, "Film."

⁸¹ Preisner, *Requiem for My Friend*.

⁸² James, "Review of Zbigniew Preisner, *Requiem for My Friend*."

⁸³ James, "Review of Zbigniew Preisner, *Requiem for My Friend*."

⁸⁴ Personal communication

⁸⁵ Williams, "Music."

“the only [thing] that connects me personally with [the] Requiem is that [the] Requiem is sad and I was born [a] pessimist.”⁸⁶ That pessimistic life began in 1955 near Kraków and Preisner did not initially study music. He is in fact self-taught. His father was a chemical engineer who moonlighted as an accordionist while Preisner was growing up in a small village. He comments, “I happened to grow up with folk music, which is something to remember and get something from. But when you’re composing music, you never know where it comes from.”⁸⁷ He studied history at Kraków University but was moved to listen to the radio while reading the scores of what was played. In doing so, he began to learn his way. His theory and composition education then came from textbooks. On his path to music Preisner comments, “it’s not important how you learn something. It’s more important who you’re with and what inspires you.”⁸⁸ He began writing for cabarets, which was incidentally where he initially met Elzbieta Towarnicka, the soprano featured in the premiere of his Requiem. She became a collaborator with Preisner and Kieślowski.

There is also an implicit nationalism surrounding Preisner. He has received multiple offers to relocate but remains in his home country of Poland.⁸⁹ At one concert, an audience member of no relation or personal familiarity to the composer was moved to stand teary-eyed and shout, “we are so proud of him.”⁹⁰ “We” being the Polish people at large. With mention of Polish nationalism in a discussion of Requiems, Krzysztof Penderecki’s (1933–2020) *Polish Requiem* (1984) cannot go unreferenced. The beloved work honors various political events and uprisings in Poland and was undoubtedly familiar to Preisner. While Preisner’s Requiem is not

⁸⁶ Personal communication

⁸⁷ Williams, “Music.”

⁸⁸ Williams, “Music.”

⁸⁹ James, “Review of Zbigniew Preisner, Requiem for My Friend.”

⁹⁰ James, “Review of Zbigniew Preisner, Requiem for My Friend.”

an overtly political composition, it is natural to associate these works due to the nationalism surrounding Preisner generally.

Preisner is a highly successful film composer, with his scores becoming popular as their own creative entities. For instance, his score for the film *The Double Life of Veronique*, also a Kieślowski production, had sold over 300,000 CDs by the time he created his Requiem.⁹¹ In the 1990s, Preisner was signed to the label Erato (Warner). Christian Hallwig of Erato, shares, “we signed him because we believe that Preisner’s work spans the classical field more than that of any other film composer.”⁹²

His Requiem is written in two primary sections, which Preisner titles “Requiem” and “Life.” They are vastly different with the first section utilizing only five solo voices in a *stile antico*. It is generally polyphonic and motet-like but with more modern harmonic choices. The second section uses full choir and orchestra, making it quite notable that this orchestra and choir sit and wait for a substantial part of the composition. This structure is in itself arguably cinematic in that it begins with a death and then retrospectively recalls life.

Table 2: The roadmap of Requiem for My Friend including section movement titles, forces, and text details.

<u>Title</u>	<u>Forces</u>	<u>Text source - language</u>
REQUIEM		
Officium	All soloists, percussion	Requiem text - Latin
Kyrie eleison	All soloists, organ	Requiem text - Latin
Dies irae	All soloists, organ	Requiem text - Latin
Offertorium	Solo cello, solo violin, bells, organ, soprano	Requiem text - Latin

⁹¹ Williams, “Music.”

⁹² James, “Review of Zbigniew Preisner, Requiem for My Friend.”

	soloist	
Sanctus	All soloists, organ, percussion	Requiem text - Latin
Agnus Dei	All strings, soprano and countertenor soloists	Requiem text - Latin
Lux aeterna (Communio)	All soloists	Requiem text - Latin
Lacrimosa	All soloists, organ, violin	Requiem text - Latin
Epitaphium	Organ	Requiem text - Latin
LIFE		
THE BEGINNING		
Meeting	Orchestra, sopranos and altos	n/a
Peace	Orchestra	n/a
Discovering the World	Orchestra	n/a
Love	Orchestra, vocal soloist	n/a
DESTINY		
Kai Kairos	Orchestra, choir, soprano soloist	Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 - Greek
APOCALYPSE		
Ascende Huc	Orchestra, choir	Revelations 4 v. 1 - Latin
Veni et Vidi	Orchestra, choir	Revelations 6 vv. 7, 8 - Latin
Qui erat et qui est	Orchestra, choir	Revelations 7 vv. 16, 17 - Latin
Lacrimosa - Day of Tears	Orchestra, choir, soprano soloist	Requiem text - Latin
POSTSCRIPTUM		
Prayer	Strings, vocal soloist	Original text by the composer - Polish

Despite the fact that the composer did not initially intend to release the work, “after a while [he] thought it was worthy” and did so.⁹³ The piece was given a premiere on October 1st, 1998 in Warsaw at the city’s opera house, the Grand Theater, to an invited audience also celebrating the launch of the CD. The recording had been made in Kraków by Preisner’s record label, Erato. The work was subsequently first premiered outside of Poland on March 19th, 1999 in London at the Royal Festival Hall. The work was received with three curtain calls and standing ovations from its sold-out audience. Stylistically speaking, the “long reverberation and expressive vibrato” of the work is typical of Preisner’s writing.⁹⁴ This is coupled with a generally sparse and grave style, as is also characteristic.⁹⁵ A review from the London Times expressed distaste for the many instances of minor thirds which bridge the two sections of the work,⁹⁶ but perhaps that is not the element on which to focus. Both performances were accompanied by a staged production of the piece designed by director Edoardo Ponti, who was selected by Preisner. Ponti eloquently describes that “the show was to be a dialogue between the one who has left this world, and the one left behind here. I wanted it to be simple, human, direct, inspired by the integrity and purity of the Requiem. I wanted an ambiance of light and shadow, but also of courage and hope.”⁹⁷ In the first section - the Requiem, Ponti created a set that “resembled a candlelit Golgotha.”⁹⁸ In the second part - Life, large silver wings floated above the musicians. By the end of the movement, they were traded for a giant window in which a man was silhouetted by light.

⁹³ Personal communication

⁹⁴ James, “Review of Zbigniew Preisner, Requiem for My Friend.”

⁹⁵ Williams, “Music.”

⁹⁶ James, “Review of Zbigniew Preisner, Requiem for My Friend.”

⁹⁷ James, “Review of Zbigniew Preisner, Requiem for My Friend.”

⁹⁸ Williams, “Music.”

Preisner has said “I think about death, and for me, the question is how shall we live and die with dignity,”⁹⁹ and this idea is a question - or aspiration - Preisner explores throughout the work.¹⁰⁰ At the opening of the piece, the Officium, we are indeed greeted by a traditional dignity - one of austere solo vocal phrases which also introduce us to the minimalism present throughout the work. Austere though, does not inherently mean impersonal. Preisner indicates a *messa di voce* on every one of these opening lines - breathing life into them. We soon see the first instance of Preisner taking a mostly traditional sound and slightly twisting something unfamiliar into it. In this case, it is a slight chromaticism into otherwise traditional and chant-like phrases. This is a style that continues. The movement ends with a picardy third, again evoking tradition and history - perhaps that is a striving for dignity.

In the Kyrie, two central musical themes of the work are introduced. The first is the use of a pedal point. Preisner frequently employs this compositional technique throughout the Requiem. One could argue it is representative of many different ideas, all with equal validity, such as the nothingness of death, the emptiness of grief, the effort to continue with life over the pedal that is a loss (as that continuation is something the composer frequently discusses), or nothing more than a pillar of Preisner’s minimalist style. The second theme first heard here is what will henceforth be referred to as the walking motive (see example 8). It consists of a quarter rest then an eighth note followed by an eighth rest, then all repeated indefinitely. Typically staying on one note, it is something of a pedal as well. It is reminiscent of a very slow march - perhaps the march to continue forward in one’s life or a more literal funeral march. This theme reappears in the Sanctus, Dies irae, and Offertorium. In the Kyrie though, it is natural to argue that it signifies the need to continue forward with one’s own life despite grief as it is joined by a

⁹⁹ James, “Review of Zbigniew Preisner, Requiem for My Friend.”

¹⁰⁰ Personal communication

slowly building and soulful passage. Eventually, the soprano soloist takes up a deeply expressive line with a high tessitura that subsequently retreats until it is only the walking motive left at the end of the movement. The mourner is continuing forward.

Example 8: Kyrie, mm. 6-9, the frequently used motives of a pedal and the walking motive simultaneously present¹⁰¹



The Dies irae too begins with a pedal and while all soloists are eventually involved in what is a relatively thick texture compared to what has been present thus far, it still remains far removed from what is typically evoked in a Dies irae movement. This movement is also unusual in its placement somewhat early in the Requiem and that it begins with the *Rex tremendae* text. The subsequent Offertorium begins with a chromatic and somewhat inebriated opening few lines from the cello. With this cinematic writing, it is natural to imagine the atmosphere of a traditional funeral scene as the opening grief-filled lines are met by the sound of a grand bell, as in a church - not unlike the bells that open the *Britten War Requiem* - and a chant-like setting of the Latin text. It creates a narrative dichotomy between the unsteady mourner and the grand funeral as represented sonically.

Following the largely homophonic Sanctus and the Agnus Dei with its introduction of a new harmonic brightness, we arrive at the Communio, which is presented in Polish - the native language of the composer. The writing of this movement is much more melodic and *cantabile*,

¹⁰¹ Preisner, *Requiem for My Friend*.

sounding like the tune of a folk song especially when juxtaposed with the previous sparse style. It is largely homophonic and feels the most informal of all that we have heard thus far. This is where friendship is arguably more evoked than the grief and tradition of the previous movements. The effect is aided by the shift in language as well. This movement seems to be the first hint of the “Life” section soon to come and the close personal relationship that inspired this work. This stylistic shift is elaborated in the *Lacrimosa* with a writing style reminiscent of an aria and soon a mantra begins that is beautifully taken up by the choir and is a personal and expressive moment of mourning. The transition into “Life” is then furthered by the instrumental *Epitafium*, whose increased movement relative to most of this first section carries us forward.

The second half of the work, “Life,” opens with a section titled “The Beginning.” Its first movement, “Meeting,” opens with an extremely unexpected alto saxophone solo. The style both in instrumentation and writing - due to the melodies and some improvisation - has shifted to be closer to jazz. The saxophone is joined by a piano *ostinato* and subsequently the first introduction of the choir on only an “ah” vowel for the duration of the movement. As previously mentioned, Preisner believes the way all of his music has an element of film scoring is in its titles, and the evocative “Meeting” falls well into that category. He also shares, “musically my Requiem is close to film music I composed for Kieslowski”¹⁰² which could certainly be seen here in the clear invocation of a specific ambiance. *Misterioso*, as the composer indicates in the score, is a very apt description. This movement does indeed transition us out of the church and into life and is perhaps indicative of Preisner’s inspirations. In his own words, “I’m not inspired by music. I’m interested in literature, philosophy, life, painting, people. That’s what is inspiring.”¹⁰³ Perhaps it is in this section of the work that we especially encounter these inspirations. Preisner

¹⁰² Personal communication

¹⁰³ Williams, “Music.”

does indeed incorporate many disparate ideas into this work: the model of ancient catholic rites, a very personal friendship and grief, the inspiration of an unfinished multimedia project, and remnants of a life. In this piece, we meet Preisner.

Subsequently in “The Beginning” there is a movement titled “Peace,” which communicates just that, and the subsequent “Discovering the World” brings a haunting recorder solo supported by strings and more of the omnipresent pedal, “*misterioso*” remains relevant, coupled with a sense of awe. In the movement “Love,” a haunting vocal line sung all on “ah” is answered by the saxophone and the two share a smooth duet underscored by the orchestra. In these movements, a plot seems to lurk in the periphery which is theoretically reflective of the unfinished work of the play by Preisner and Krzysztof.

The next section, “Destiny,” contains only “*Kai Kairos*” (meaning, “and a time”), which uses a Greek translation of Ecclesiastes. Stylistically, it could have been lifted from an opera and placed into this work. It is more in a Romantic style than has yet been the case, with much drama. The first movement of the “Apocalypse” section, “*Ascende huc*,” opens with a peculiar, sharp, and suspenseful recitation of the syllable “*vae*” on *forte* cluster chords by the tenors and basses, the cello and bass playing *cola voce*. This continues while the sopranos and altos interject melodies largely in thirds as the tenors and basses retreat, creating what is almost a double choir effect (see example 9). With the constant chanting of the tenors and basses, they seem to become more percussion than vocalists. The following movement, “*Veni et Vidi*,” is what one could have expected from the earlier *Dies irae*. It opens with the choir cinematically singing “*veni*” in clipped and intense cluster chords over low, plodding, quarter-note octaves from the cello, bass, and piano. The “*vae*” chant motive soon returns and this time the effect is more ominous as there is less activity from the orchestra and the sopranos and altos do not interject. It then fades to

nothing. “*Qui Erat et Qui Est*,” the next movement, explodes in march-like quarter notes and has moments of the same intensity we encountered in “*Veni et Vidi*.” It concludes bringing us back to church in what has the tone of a tragic and dramatic chorale with a slow homophonic and syllabic text declamation. The subsequent, and second, *Lacrimosa* is largely identical to the previous one, making the mantra all the more so in its repetition.

Example 9: “*Ascende huc*,” mm.16-18, the tenors and basses continue with their “*vae*” cluster chords while the sopranos and altos interject in thirds¹⁰⁴

16

B. Cl. *p* *mp*

S. *più mp* *mf*
- bi quæ o - por - tet fie - ri

A. *più mp* *mf*
- bi quæ o - por - tet fie - ri

T. *mp* *cresc.*
vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae

B. *mp* *cresc.*
vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae, vae

Vln. I *più mp*

Vln. II *più mp*

Vla. *più mp*

4 Vlc. *più mp*

2 Vlc. *pp* *mp* *cresc.*

D.B. *mp* *cresc.*

¹⁰⁴ Preisner, *Requiem for My Friend*.

The final section, “Postscriptum,” is a prayer and its only movement is titled as such. The text is the composer’s,¹⁰⁵ and it consists musically of a melody over an expansive pedal in the orchestra. Here we find some of the intimacy evident in the title *Requiem for My Friend*, evoking the fact that the composition emerged from music that Preisner wrote for Kieślowski’s funeral for organ and voice. In the composer’s native language, he prays. The composer shares that the work, “is very personal” and elaborates, “I am asking for the strength to go on living in this sad situation. In my life, there were only very few people I wanted to spend time with. One of them was Krzysztof. This prayer is also a request, that such friendship could be found once more.”¹⁰⁶ The work begins and ends with the intimacy of a solo voice. The emotion behind the grief and prayer is the same whether it is the language of the church or the vernacular. In his Requiem, Preisner takes an austere, Catholic form and reminds us that grief is intensely personal and complex, filled with life and all that was held within the relationship lost.

In this analysis, Preisner’s Requiem is an example of the modern expansions of the form, incorporating and melding the diverse influences on music today, such as film writing. It is also representative of the potential for melding within the Requiem, with polyphony, jazz, cinematic writing, instrumental composition, and Mass texts all merging. It also reveals that the ancient form has a remarkable continued relevance, being able to effectively and powerfully speak to the death of a Polish film director in 1996. In the newspaper article by Richard Williams frequently cited here, Preisner shares a reflection that speaks not only to his own experience, but perhaps the experience of many who set Requiems, which is worthy of reprinting in full:

¹⁰⁵ Personal communication

¹⁰⁶ James, “Review of Zbigniew Preisner, Requiem for My Friend.”

For me, it's the end of something, and the beginning of something else. I think [when the piece premiered] I finished the era of my work with Krzysztof. I did what I could. I tried to do something new, something different, something in his dimension. When people like Krzysztof die, the question is whether we have enough strength to take over from them. Whether we have enough strength to say, "Now it's our time. Now look at us." Do we have enough talent? Until we try, we don't know. We know that there is a future waiting for us. Some of us are involved in the thing called art - I don't like the word, but I don't know a better one. We were born from the art, and educated by it. And we have a duty to do something more. Somebody has left us something, and we too must leave something, leave some testimony of our time.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Williams, "Music."

Conclusion: The Requiem Today

As the Requiem Mass evolved from Catholic funerals to the concert hall, its breadth expanded to allow for the exploration of ideas and missions unrelated to its liturgical roots. These new concepts were typically ones of great personal significance to composers, further making these compositions inseparable from their creators. This inseparability, though, was present in Requiem compositions, regardless of any extraneous ideas, due to the universal emotional weight of its baseline subject matter. It is a form impossible to tackle without the incorporation of self. The quantity and diversity of Requiem compositions also illustrate how grief is a complex and shared emotion. It is an element of our collective experience. Speaking powerfully to this shared burden, the Requiem has become an amorphous form that intimately encapsulates our common experience of loss in many ways.

It would not be possible to discuss all fascinating Requiem compositions within the space of one paper, but two other shortlisted compositions well-suited to this discussion are Eleanor Daley's (b. 1955) *Requiem* and Vyacheslav Artyomov's (b. 1940) *Requiem*. Canadian composer Eleanor Daley's composition is an a cappella work with soprano and baritone soloists and was premiered July 17th, 1993. It is best known for its fourth movement (of eight) titled "In Remembrance." It would be easy for one to mistakenly assume that this movement is a standalone piece as it is somewhat difficult to find the rest of the composition on paper or recorded as "In Remembrance" is often produced independently. It is a moving statement on the idea that the dead are never truly gone, but rather exist in everything surrounding us. The anonymous text begins "do not stand at my grave and weep. I am not there, I do not sleep. I am a thousand winds that blow, I am the diamond glint on snow." It utilizes pictorial writing throughout these invocations of natural phenomena, including a final *decrescendo al niente* to

whisper “I am not there, I did not die.” The Requiem at large utilizes some of the traditional Requiem Mass texts, biblical selections, a Russian Benediction, the Burial Service 1662 Book of Common Prayer, and draws from *The Sound of Birds*, a sequence of poems from Carolyn Smart’s book *The Way to Come Home* (1992), an example of which can be found below. The setting of secular poetry has not been discussed at length in this research, only appearing in the Britten, but the practice lends itself to Requiem compositions. It honors and answers representations of grief from different artforms, creating an interdisciplinary conversation. While not being of immense proportions, major historical significance, or in the aid of a cause, Daley’s Requiem, like many others, is a powerful testament to the experience of grief and continues to expand this genre of composition. It is this multitude of Requiems standing in the shadows of those more prominent that give the genre its diversity - one of its greatest strengths.

Example 10: A selection from Carolyn Smart’s *The Sound of Birds*, a sequence of poetry from her book *The Way to Come Home* as presented in the first movement of Eleanor Daley’s

*Requiem*¹⁰⁸

Each night I listened for your call,
when your call stopped
I held my breath, suspended,

I’d grown accustomed to a dialogue with
silence,
then wait for the sounds of night

you, dying,
and I but witness to the end

As mentioned in the introduction of this research, Vyacheslav Artyomov’s *Requiem* is notable in that it utilizes all of the traditional liturgical texts in full, as is not often done. The

¹⁰⁸ Daley, Eleanor. *Requiem*. Jubilate Archive Edition. Brentwood, Tennessee: Jubilate Music Group - H.W. Gray, 1995.

work has seven sections and fifteen movements total. It is additionally significant in that Artyomov is an eastern composer who has chosen to set this decidedly western musical form, making him something of an outlier. His composition (written in 1985–1988) is dedicated to “the Martyrs of long-suffering Russia” and was the first Requiem to ever be aired on Moscow state radio.¹⁰⁹ Artyomov considers himself to be a follower of the Romantic tradition¹¹⁰ and that is certainly evident in his composition. The work is written for six soloists, choir, boy’s choir, orchestra, and organ - forces that rival the immense proportions of Britten’s composition. The choral-orchestral score for this work at moments looks similar to Thomas Tallis’ expansive *Spem in Alium* with its 40 vocal parts. In the Sanctus, for instance, there are 42 simultaneous vocal lines - even more than in Tallis’ famed composition. The orchestral writing also adopts such proportions. For instance, in the fifteenth and final movement, In paradisum, there are 48 staves of orchestral parts, all with independent lines that undeniably mandate such printing. This composition serves as a representation of the Requiem continuing to expand into new directions but in this case without deviation from its sacred roots, making this work somewhat of an exception to modern trends.

Over centuries, the concept of the Requiem has entered western public awareness and become a term that is both familiar and evocative for many people regardless of their faith background or musical interests. There are many examples of the use of the term “Requiem” in popular culture. One that is prominent would be the song titled “Requiem” from the extremely popular 2015 musical, *Dear Evan Hansen*. In this song, two parents and their daughter mourn the death of their son/brother with differing perspectives on this controversial character. The concept of the Requiem weaves through all three perspectives - they all sing a variation on the line “I will

¹⁰⁹ Artyomov, Vyacheslav. *Requiem*. Edited by Valeriya Lyubetskaya. Moscow: Music Printing House, 2000, 6.

¹¹⁰ Artyomov, *Requiem*, 6.

sing no Requiem tonight.” The mother says this because she still feels her son’s presence, the father because he remains angry, and the sister because she confesses that she feels no grief. The very fact that the composers decided to evoke the idea of a Requiem as a central device of this musical intended for a popular audience reveals the understanding that the Requiem is familiar to most. There are many other non-classical musical examples such as mainstream popular composers like Andrew Lloyd Webber or Sting (who wrote a *Dies irae*) trying their hands at the form. Many other disparate uses of the name Requiem can be found seemingly endless such as multiple TV shows, a planet in a video game, a haunted house in Idaho, a font, and a winery. The Requiem has grown from a Catholic mass for the dead to an evocative term with which we are all familiar, as evidenced by its modern usages.

Requiems have also taken on political messages with time - an aim for which they are quite effective despite such missions having nothing to do with their original purpose. The Britten, as previously explored, is one excellent example of this, but there are plenty of others. For instance, Frederick Delius (1862–1934) also wrote an anti-war Requiem, in his case, during the First World War. It was even more secular than Britten’s with all English texts and none from the traditional Mass. It appears to comment against institutional religion as a secondary aim.¹¹¹ Similarly, John Herbert Foulds (1880–1939) wrote *A World Requiem* from 1919–1921 asking for peace between nations and religions.¹¹² In 2017, Gabriela Lena Frank (b. 1972) wrote a piece entitled *Conquest Requiem* about the painful Spanish invasion of Aztec lands in the early 1500s told from the perspective of the Aztecs. It combines the poetry of Nilo Cruz with the traditional Requiem text and is told in Latin, Spanish, and Nahuatl, an Aztec language.

¹¹¹ Marx, “‘Requiem Sempiternam’?” 122.

¹¹² Marx, “‘Requiem Sempiternam’?” 122.

Also with a political-historical aim, composer Damien Geter wrote *An African American Requiem* in response to the violence against Black communities in the United States both historically and currently. Geter's twenty-movement work utilizes African-American spirituals and incorporates texts from Ida B. Wells and activist Jamilia Land. In his *Dies irae*, he employs the last words of Eric Garner, a victim of police violence. The composer was surprised by "how pertinent the Latin texts can be today, though not necessarily from a religious standpoint." Also in response to violence, composer Steven Samitz (b. 1954) wrote *A Child's Requiem* prompted by school shootings, namely the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012. In reaction to a different kind of violence, Composer Michael Conley wrote his *Appalachian Requiem* (2017) using the texts of female poets in Appalachia from the 1800s through today and the style of shape-note singing. He had a mission of mourning the destruction of land from mountaintop removal mining in the region. As the composer states, it is "not a Requiem in the traditional sense, with the intent of consoling the living on the death of a fellow human being, but with the idea in mind of lamenting the loss of an old and enduring culture, and an environmental heritage that continues to be under assault."¹¹³ All of these works join the many Requiems for wars and for natural and unnatural disasters such as Hiroshima, the assassinations of the Italian mafia, 9/11, or the AIDS crisis,¹¹⁴ which collectively reveal the natural proclivity towards this form in times of crisis.

Requiems have entered efforts of resistance from mistreatment not only through intentional composition, but also through the tactful performance of works initially written for unrelated purposes. For instance, during the Holocaust in the transit camp Terezín, which was

¹¹³ May, Thomas. "Singing of Loss, Saving through Memory: The Healing Power of Secular Requiems | Chorus America." Chorus America, June 18, 2020.
<https://chorusamerica.org/article/singing-loss-saving-through-memory-healing-power-secular-requiems>.

¹¹⁴ Marx, "Requiem Sempiternam?" 126.

created in 1941 just outside of Prague, there was a performance of Verdi's *Requiem* organized in 1943–1944. Conductor Rafael Schächter was known in the camp for his intense commitment to his choir of prisoners and his expectation for them to be equally so. He succeeded in the astounding feat of this performance despite the incredibly harsh and repressive conditions of the camp and he reimagined the work for a political aim. Verdi's *Requiem* is famous for its bombastic *Dies irae* evoking the terrors of judgment day and hell. In Schächter's programming of the work, instead of the usual fear of damnation and prayer for the salvation of the departed soul, these inmates sang to scathe the Nazis. Through the music, they told their captors of the horrible judgment and painful end they would suffer at the hands of the divine. Schächter took a *Requiem* that was not inherently an act of resistance and made it so. Slovakian composer Silvie Boderova (b. 1954) was so moved by the account of this occurrence that she wrote *Terezin Ghetto Requiem*, a work for baritone and string quartet in honor of the Czechoslovakian composers who died in the war as well as the communist regime that followed. The piece opens with a quote from Verdi's *Lacrimosa*, a reference to Schächter's performance, and juxtaposes Catholic texts with Hebrew Synagogue chant.

As we look to the future of the *Requiem*, it may become less the “*Requiem Mass*” and more the “*Requiem*” - an idea essentially separate from its liturgical beginnings. The *Requiem* has become its own secular concept with connotations of death, mourning, commemoration, and honoring. Considering its tenacity and evolution, it is natural to predict that the *Requiem* will continue to exist, but just as much in our vernacular as an evocative noun than as a musical form. That is the thread that will continue: the *Requiem* becoming increasingly less exclusive - from the Catholic church and intimate funerals to concert halls and the middle-class public to the common vernacular. Musically, it is hard to imagine that the *Requiem* will fade from its position

as an attractive genre for composers. Its emotional weight, evocative text potential, and immense history all create a draw difficult to refuse. In the future of the form, will there be a musical retrospection embracing the early polyphonic styles? A leap into modern techniques not yet common? Perhaps a complete abandonment of the liturgical texts? It is hard to say, but what does seem clear is that the secularized reimagining of the Requiem will continue. The Requiem serves to honor the complex experience of loss on both personal and collective levels. It reminds us that people many centuries ago experienced the same pains and questions that we do today, as will those after us. While music will continue to evolve in directions we cannot yet know, the Requiem will follow us, bringing sorrow, hope, thoughtfulness, and beauty to all who care to listen.

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